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KINGSTON
ATHENÆUM.

MRS. ARMYTAGE;

OR,

FEMALE DOMINATION.

BY THE

AUTHORESS OF

"MOTHERS AND DAUGHTERS."

SECOND EDITION.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
HENRY COLBURN:
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FEMALE DOMANITION.

CHAPTER I.

——— Such a nature,
Tickled with good success, disdains the shadow
Which she treads on at noon.

SHAKSPEARE.

"THE post is late this morning!" said Mrs. Armytage, having finished her second cup of tea, and pushed away a plate disordered with chippings of egg-shell and French roll; while her daughter Sophy, to whom the apostrophe was addressed, aware that her mother measured the proceedings of the world, and the progress of time, by a dial peculiarly her own, did not venture to observe that, as they had sat down to breakfast half an hour earlier

than usual, the newspaper could scarcely arrive in time for its usual office of concluding the ceremonial of the morning meal.

Another moment, and her forbearance was rewarded. Old Simmons, the butler, on making his appearance to remove the urn, placed upon the table, in addition to the two daily papers, two letters from the post-bag; one for his lady, and another, a double one, for Miss Sophia. A double letter, and in her brother Arthur's hand-writing! — What rich repayment for having forborne to tax her mother with being unreasonable!

Mrs. Armytage, of Holywell Park, was one of those parents who, while affecting to encourage in their family all possible freedom of thought and action, exercise over their children the utmost rigour of petty despotism. Deluding herself into a belief that she was the most liberal of mothers, she had been heard to thank heaven, and the late Mr. Armytage, for having left her son and daugh-

ter independent of her, so that no mutual restraint could exist between them; although it was well known that this independence consisted in a provision of a few hundreds a year for each; while *she,* in her own right as an heiress, enjoyed an estate of thrice as many thousands! Even while pretending to sanction the most affectionate mutual confidence between Sophy and her brother, it was remarkable how minutely she contrived to inform herself of all that was said or written between them. Mrs. Armytage was, in short, a woman of arbitrary temper; whose disposition had been cultivated into all the ungraciousness of egotism by the indulgence of an inert and adoring husband.

"What does Arthur say?"—She inquired of her daughter, as soon as Sophy reached the second page of her correspondence.

"Nothing particular, mamma!" replied the young lady, with a deep blush, folding up the letter, though manifestly half unread; and

insinuating it under her waistbelt, as if determined against offering the contents to her mother's participation.

"'Nothing particular' seems to possess a very particular influence over your feelings," persisted mamma, whose temper had been already set on edge by the perusal of her own letter—a missive from her London solicitor, giving an unfavourable account of a lawsuit. "But do not distress yourself; be assured I have no wish to pry into the mysteries conjured up between yourself and Arthur."

"Thank you, mamma. There are no mysteries between us," said Sophy, in a somewhat more decided tone than usual. "But I own I had rather not show you my brother's letter."

"Did I ask you?" cried Mrs. Armytage, apparently bent upon being affronted.

"No,—oh! no!—only I was afraid—"

"Afraid! you would fain make people be-

lieve that I keep my children in desperate awe of me!"

"Indeed I would not, mother," replied Sophy, casting round the room a glance which implied—"We are alone; whom can I be intent upon deceiving?"

"Yes! I understand your meaning!—you would say, now we are *tête-à-tête*, I may triumph in having my own way. There is no one here to notice in how many trivial particulars I can contrive to vex and mortify my mother!"

Sophy was for a moment tempted to appeal to Mrs. Armytage's sense of justice, against this harsh interpretation; but, warned by frequent experience that expostulation was fatal on such occasions, and that it was better to leave her mother to the reaction of a naturally generous mind, she rose from the table, contenting herself with observing, "Arthur desires me to say that he will write to you tomorrow."

"I am much obliged to him!—no doubt he will!"—was the indignant rejoinder of Mrs. Armytage; "as soon as you have settled in what terms I am to be addressed, and what is to be told me, and what concealed between you."

And this hypothesis of the irate lady was unluckily too near the truth, to admit of Sophy's hazarding a word of reply. She accordingly quitted the breakfast-room for her own apartment, in order to bestow her undivided attention upon the communication of her brother.

For Arthur's was indeed no common letter! It was not, as usual, a barren catalogue of names; a list of the persons whose balls he frequented, or whose dinners were hospitably bestowed upon the only son of the rich Mrs. Armytage. There was not a single invective against his commanding officer, nor a murmur against his mother's obstinacy in passing the season in the country.—No! Arthur seemed to

have forgotten *himself;* his whole existence was suddenly merged in that of another; he was in love, avowedly and desperately in love.

That, however, to his sister's knowledge, he had been a thousand times before; but a new feature was now added to his disorder, which caused poor Sophy's hands to tremble as they upheld the letter containing the announcement: Arthur was about to be married!— Without any previous reference to his mother's wishes — without so much as having acquainted her with the name of the object of his attachment—he had actually proposed and been accepted. His hand was irrevocably pledged; and the ominous admeasurement of his Marian's taper finger already under the custody of a fashionable forger of matrimonial fetters.

Such are the destinies of positive people! Mrs. Armytage exercised, in fact, far less influence over the conduct of her children than many a parent, indifferent to the maintenance

of parental prerogative. "If I were to fall in love with an angel, blest with a peerage in her own right, and a million in the five per cents," was Arthur's frequent argument with himself, and occasionally with his sister, "my mother would be sure to raise objections; and I shall therefore evade the sin of disobedience by settling the whole affair without her knowledge. She will be much less likely to refuse her consent, when she knows that resistance is useless!"

Yet, although thus prepared for her brother's proceedings, Sophy regretted that he had been so precipitate. She knew Arthur. She knew that to all his talents, all his excellencies, was united a very moderate degree of sobriety of judgment; and, though she loved him the better for his rash but generous singleness of heart, she felt that these qualities were little calculated to exercise an advantageous influence over his choice of a wife. Her dear Arthur was certain to make

an imprudent marriage! In this one instance, perhaps, the petulance of her mother's opposition might have been beneficial to his prospects.

But it was too late! Arthur Armytage admitted that he was actually engaged,—actually what is called "going to be married." The projects of his settlement in life seemed fully organized. He announced his intention of selling his commission, and hiring a small place in some hunting county,—a farm,—a cottage *orné*,—an Eden surrounded by low fences and green pastures; where he and his Marian might settle down to all the sublunary happiness compassable within a hawthorn-hedge and four hundred and fifty pounds a-year.

A world of intelligence was conveyed to Sophia in this exact specification of income. The amount sufficed to prove that "Marian," instead of being a divinity with the often-named peerage, and the million in the five per

cents, was as unencumbered by worldly pelf as the most disinterested lover could require; and that Arthur had good reason to know his match was not of a nature to open his mother's heart, or her purse-strings. Sophy was sorry! Whatever might be Mrs. Armytage's infirmities of temper, her interest in her children's welfare was warmly maternal; and Sophia felt that ill-advised indeed must be the choice which her brother had set down as hopelessly irreconcileable with her prejudices. When, therefore, she reached, at the end of his second page, an admission that his adored Marian was unenhanced in her attractions by the vulgar recommendations of birth and fortune,—that she was the offspring of a Mr. and Mrs. Baltimore, of Baker-street,—the mother ill-mannered, the father ill-connected,—she could not persuade herself to join in Arthur's self-gratulations, that he should become the means of separating a creature so angelic from a family so thoroughly disagreeable. It appeared that he had been

introduced to Miss Baltimore, at some ball to which she had accompanied a rich West Indian aunt, who was buying her way into society;—that Marian's charms had done much to enslave him, and the advances of her family the rest.

"Mamma always predicted that Arthur would be taken in!" murmured Sophy to herself, when a second time she closed the letter. "And though I feel that he is incapable of bestowing his affections on an unamiable or vulgar-minded girl, I do not half like this hasty match!"

Sophia could not presume to hope that the four hundred and fifty pounds per annum, and the cottage in the hunting county, would gratify the ambition of her mother; for even she, with all the liberality of nineteen and an honest disposition, was of opinion that such a prospect was inadequate to the inherited and personal pretensions of Arthur Armytage, of Holywell.

CHAPTER II.

——— able, if she chose, to please,
Punctual and right in common offices,
She lost all sight of conduct's only worth,—
The scattering smiles on this uneasy earth.

LEIGH HUNT.

NOTWITHSTANDING the prohibition expressed in her brother's postscript—of "Leave *me* to make the disclosure to my mother; I will write to-morrow," which had motived, in the first instance, her reserve with Mrs. Armytage, Sophy, following the impulses of her ingenuous nature, soon longed to reveal the important family secret of which she was the depository. Secrets of her own she had never had to conceal;—it was only with regard to Arthur's indiscretions that she had now and then been compelled to caution; and every thing like mystery was painful to her. She began to fear, too, that Arthur's proceedings were not the

more likely to meet her mother's approbation for having been the cause of four-and-twenty hours' ill-humour.

But Mrs. Armytage, when once seriously thwarted, became impracticable! It was in vain that her daughter strove to lead the way towards the subject weighing on her mind, in hopes she would again evince some inquisitiveness, or perhaps insist on a disclosure. But having readily discerned the compunctious visitings of Sophy's candour, Mrs. Armytage laid aside all curiosity—all interest. She would not be consulted,—she would not be instructed:—without giving utterance to the instigations of her obstinacy, she plainly showed herself determined to know nothing about the matter. She declined her usual morning drive, lest she should find herself *tête-à-tête* with the delinquent; and twice in the course of the day, when Sophy, by what she flattered herself was dexterous management, contrived to introduce her brother's name, Mrs. Armytage replied,

once by reciting the pedigree of a horse she had commissioned her head coachman to purchase at Doncaster; and once by expressing her wonder whether their neighbours, the Wemmersleys, of Mill Hill, had received any further intelligence concerning the arrival of a rich uncle they were expecting from Carolina.

Sophy felt herself defeated. The blood tingled painfully in her soft transparent cheek, when thus out-generalled by her mother. But the more she pondered on the case, the more she became convinced of its urgency; and no sooner had the servant withdrawn after placing dessert upon the table, than she burst out, without further premeditation, into, "Mother, I see you are determined I shall not talk to you about Arthur; but I am *so* eager to consult you, and *so* conscious you ought to be consulted, that" ——

"What makes you imagine that I do not choose to talk about Arthur?" inquired Mrs. Armytage, coolly; "on the contrary, I was

talking about him for half an hour this afternoon with the Wemmersleys."

"Have they been here?"

"They called while you were walking in the shrubbery."

"I am sorry I did not see them."

"They would have told *you* nothing with which you were not already acquainted—to *me*, it *was* news; and, certainly, news which I did not expect to hear from strangers—that my only son was going to be married!"

"You knew it then, and would not relieve my mind by conferring with me on the subject," ejaculated Sophy, in dismay; for, of all things, she most apprehended in her mother a cool fit like the present.

"I am aware of nothing to require conference," answered Mrs. Armytage, peeling an almond with the most minute assiduity. "*My* opinion has not been asked; neither my feelings nor my judgment have been consulted; and all I have to desire for *our* sake, if not for

his, is, that Arthur's match may turn out less unfortunate than circumstances induce me to anticipate."

"My dear mother, you alarm me! What have you heard? What did the Wemmersleys know about it? And how came they to be so officious as to talk about the matter?"

"They came here on the neighbourly errand of congratulation."

"So like Mr. Wemmersley! When anything disagreeable occurs in a family, he is so sure to make his appearance with his congratulations!"

"You are not very gracious to your brother, my dear, in terming his marriage 'something disagreeable.' But you can hardly blame Mr. Wemmersley for paying me the respect of wishing me joy on a family event, which, being so far public as to have been communicated to him in a letter from town, he had no reason to suppose was still a secret from the mother of Arthur Armytage."

"And what did he tell you of these Baltimores?"

"Not much. When he found me totally ignorant of the affair (indeed, but for the mysterious face you assumed in reading your letter this morning, I should have been inclined to deny the whole as an idle rumour), he seemed to think it might be unfair to my son to forestall his own communication."

"And thus, by implication, managed to create a suspicion in your mind that—"

"He implied *nothing!*" hastily interrupted Mrs. Armytage: "he owned frankly and fairly, the match was considered so *very* brilliant a one for the young lady, that he feared it would scarcely turn out a satisfactory one for my son."

"How does he know?"

"In the way most things are known in this world: through the bad habit in which we indulge of gossiping about the affairs of our neighbours. Arthur Armytage of the Life

Guards—the dashing, laughing, flirting Arthur Armytage, the supposed heir to Holywell and fifteen thousand a year,—is a person of sufficient importance to have his follies discussed in society; till, at last, his imprudent marriage comes to form a paragraph in a London letter to a country correspondent. Shall we go into the drawing-room?"

"But Mr. Wemmersley had heard no positive *harm* of the Baltimores?" persisted Sophia, rising to follow her mother.

"I fancy they are obscure people, of whom no one is likely to have heard either good *or* harm," said Mrs. Armytage, taking her place beside the drawing-room work-table. "And now, my dear Sophia, as we shall certainly hear enough of them in the course of the next six months, oblige me by dismissing the subject."

"You will not read Arthur's letter?" faltered Sophy.

"You know I never read writing by candle-light."

"Will you give me leave to read it to you, my dear mother?"

"No! my dear; keep your brother's secrets —keep your own. When his interests are to be served by the disclosure, no doubt my son will communicate with me on the subject of the step he has taken."

"Oh! no, mother, you cannot accuse Arthur of being *interested!*—of *that* failing, at least, he is altogether guiltless."

"Like most people whose wishes and whims have been forestalled through life. We have yet to learn what impulse his character will receive from his connexion with such people as the Baltimores."

"Such people! I am convinced you know more about them than you like to tell me."

"I know nothing—absolutely nothing; except that (without having met with reverses in life), they are people of very small fortune; and a man with a large family, who remains

poor at fifty years of age, must be wanting in intelligence, activity, connexion, or probity."

Sophy, who could not always follow her mother's line of reasoning, contented herself with answering in a dispirited voice,—"Let us hope that Mr. Baltimore may be wanting in the first. Distress, at least, need not entail an hereditary stigma."

"His daughter has certainly displayed no want of intelligence in ensnaring a young man of Arthur's prospects," said Mrs. Armytage, her cool fit giving way to rising choler. "A girl without name—without a shilling—without—"

"Dearest mother, let us—as you proposed just now—defer the discussion till we hear what Arthur has to say for himself."

"You have read what he has chosen to write for himself; yet you have not a single argument to offer in favour of the match!"

"I am persuaded my brother is incapable of allying himself unworthily."

"I am equally sure that no one is more likely to be deceived as to the worth of those with whom he comes in collision. Arthur was born to be a dupe! and instead of fortifying his judgment by taking counsel with those who have more worldly wisdom than himself—"

"Ah! mother!—*Who* takes council in matters of love? Arthur seems to have made his proposals before he knew what he was about."

"*That* was a rash measure!" answered Mrs. Armytage, taking up a book; a well-known signal to her daughter that she wished to put an end to the conversation. "I suspect he knows what he has been about, by this time."

And thus silenced, poor Sophy had only to betake herself for consolation to her worsted-work for the remainder of the evening, surrounding her roses and pansies with sky-blue leaves, while she pondered and pondered upon the state of family affairs. She saw that her mother was irritated; and hoped she would sleep off her sense of vexation. Mrs. Armytage

was a lover of early hours and family order; and being left to herself, would probably perceive the wisdom of making the best of a bad business.

But Arthur seemed intent on ruining his own cause. At two o'clock in the morning, three hours after the family had retired to rest, the dogs began to bark violently in the quiet courtyard. The house-bell rung, the office-doors slammed, scuffling feet were heard in the hall; and, at length, Mrs. Armytage having rung up her own maid to ascertain the cause of so unusual a disturbance, had the dissatisfaction of learning that "the Captain was come down from town, in a chaise and four."

Unluckily, too, the maid was an ancient and most rheumatic spinster; who, much inclined to resent being called out of her warm bed in the middle of the night, for the first time since the birth of Miss Sophia, thought proper to add that "Everything was at sixes and sevens; that Miss Sophy was up, and supping with her

brother in the dining-room; and the whole house turned topsy-turvy."

Mrs. Armytage immediately fancied she could discern from the hall the asthmatic cough of her venerable butler, and felt that the peace of her "regular" establishment was scandalously invaded. Captain Armytage evidently considered himself privileged to take all possible liberties in her house. After waking up the servants by arriving at such a preposterous hour, why not at least retire to rest, and let other people rest, without creating further inconvenience?

Mrs. Armytage was just then as little inclined to admit the necessity of a sandwich and a glass of sherry, after a hurried journey of a hundred and ninety-four miles, as the irresistibility of Miss Marian Baltimore, with all her sweetness, beauty, and accomplishments. Even sleep did not subdue the peremptory lady's exasperation against her son.

CHAPTER III.

My blood hath been too cold and temperate,
Unapt to stir at these indignities,
And you have found me; for accordingly
You tread upon my patience.

SHAKSPEARE.

IT was Arthur Armytage's misfortune that the London letter-bag arrived at Holywell at so early an hour as eight of the clock; it was his *fault* that he selected a moment equally matinal for his conference with his mother. Before her displeasure of the night had been soothed down by a single cup of mild, balmy, benignant, sorrow and choler-soothing Bohea, he chose to make his way into her dressing-room, and unburthen himself of his secret. Poor fellow! He had been made such an idol by the whole tribe of Baltimore during his recent courtship,

that he was unprepared to fancy he could be in the wrong elsewhere.

But he was fated to be roughly undeceived. Sophia, who with a beating heart saw her mother and brother descend into the breakfast-room together, and take their seats at the table, perceived in a moment, from a certain compression of her mother's lips, and from the brilliant crimson peeping through the tangled masses of Arthur's rich brown hair, just where his small, well-turned ear was partially visible, that both were labouring under the effects of suppressed passion. She was too well acquainted with Arthur's rightness of mind to apprehend for a moment that he had forgotten himself towards his mother; but she did fear, tremblingly, tearfully, that Mrs. Armytage had been seized with one of her fits of implacability, and thrown down the gauntlet to her son. What was to be done; and how was peace to be restored between them?

By nature petulant, the character of Mrs.

Armytage, of Holywell, had been rendered arbitrary by circumstances. The only daughter of a wealthy, high-principled, high-tempered English squire, (whose sister had been reduced to beggary by a spendthrift husband, and, as he insisted, chiefly on account of her own ignorance and carelessness of business) Caroline Maudsley had been brought up by her father, precisely as he was bringing up Charles, whose premature death left her heiress to the fine estate of Holywell. She was taught to ride, to run, to settle with the steward and housekeeper, to parley with the farmers, to dispute with the tax-gatherers. A little Latin, and a great deal of arithmetic, bounded her accomplishments. Of music she knew nothing, except as an art whose professors might be hired for her entertainment; or of dancing, except as an exercise far less invigorating than a gallop on the wolds. Law and theology, Blackstone and Tillotson, were the studies inculcated by her preceptor, the curate of the parish; and

it was perhaps attributable to the surprise with which the good old man found himself suddenly transformed into the pedagogue of a beautiful girl of fifteen, that his spiritual pastorship was so insufficiently exercised in curbing the peremptoriness of her disposition. He discerned in the mind of his pupil a fund of sound and sober sense; and doubted not that it would in time avail to reform her faults of character. But, alas! there is no point on which the re-action of the mind operates so slowly and imperfectly as on the infirmities of a wilful temper.

Caroline Maudsley, therefore, grew to woman's estate, and was still positive, still ungovernable; yet neither squire nor curate could detect a fault in her. It had been the long-planned project of her father to unite his beautiful heiress with the head of another branch of his family, Sir John Maudsley, of Maudsley Hall; but at nineteen, Caroline announced a decided preference for the son of

her father's old schoolfellow, Arthur Armytage, a less dignified, but more attractive suitor; and the old gentleman, according to his custom, eventually submitted to her will. Nay, he soon began to participate in his daughter's affection for his estimable son-in-law; and it was generally considered, that nothing but old Maudsley's sudden death a few years after their marriage, had prevented the re-modification of a will by which he left the whole of his property at the separate and absolute disposal of his daughter. Willingly would Mrs. Armytage have resigned her authority to her husband, for she was of a generous disposition, not yet confirmed into the love of sway; but Armytage would not hear of it. The estate could not be better than in her hands; for even his own small property of a thousand a year gave him more trouble in the management than suited his reckless habits. He devoted himself, accordingly, to hunting, fishing, shooting, eating, and drinking, without much

care for the estate or the morrow; and died on the field—not of glory, but of fox-hunting—killed by a fall from his horse, at the early age of eight-and-twenty! And thus, his young widow became sole arbitress of the destinies of his children: a very trifling accession to the authority she had exercised as his wife.

Caroline never married again: perhaps, because she honoured the memory of so subservient a husband; perhaps, because she fancied that no other human being would be content to eclipse himself in the shadow of her talents and her virtues. *She* fancied that the sacrifice (for she had many and advantageous suitors) was made to the interests of her children—and to do her justice, she *was* a prudent and affectionate mother—while their tender years admitted not the apprehension of their opposition to her autocracy at Holywell.

Nothing could be happier than the union of the little family, so long as the arbitrary tendencies of Mrs. Armytage's temper were re-

stricted to the management and legislation of her dependants and country neighbours, a task, indeed, which afforded her ample employment. From the period of her husband's untimely end, she had never suffered the hounds to traverse her territories; and this prohibition in a sporting county, and from the daughter and widow of sportsmen, involved her in endless disputes. Electioneering, too, brought its squabbles; and Mrs. Armytage, who knew that the Holywell rents had never been raised during the agrarian extortions of the trumpeting time of war, had no idea of lowering them, after the example of her less liberal neighbours, during the piping times of peace. In short, she had a will of her own in the county; and, in a county so wide and so various in its interests as Yorkshire, it is much easier to *have* a will and to maintain it, than in such provinces as Herts or Hunts, where every public opinion is traceable to the influence of Hatfield or Hinchinbrooke.

The Lady of Holywell, whose throne was fixed in her own domain from Christmas to Midsummer, as well as from Midsummer to Christmas, and who was consequently exempt from the fashion-hunting meanness of party-giving, or going, manœuvres, was perhaps, somewhat too sturdy in her sense of independence. Disgusted by the servility she observed in the Wemmersleys of Mill Hill, and others of her country neighbours, she prided herself on keeping up a surly sense of dignity with her neighbour Lord Rotherham, merely because he was an Earl! There might, perhaps, have been virtue in her ungraciousness towards the noble inhabitants of Greta Castle, had Lord and Lady Rotherham affected the transcendent self-exaltation exhibited by the family of the Duke of Spalding, resident at the other side of the county. But Lord Rotherham was the simplest-hearted and most straightforward of men; while his lady knew nothing, and cared for nothing, but the re-

gistry of the ages, misery, and ailments of her ten children: so that the majesty of Mrs. Armytage's *hauteur* was completely thrown away.

But for some time past her manners, if not her feelings, had considerably thawed towards the family. Her son, at Eton and Oxford, was the chosen friend of young Lord Greta; Lady Laura, the only one of the girls grown up, was not to be repulsed in her attachment to Sophy Armytage, and in the end, the Lady of Holywell found it impossible to keep up the defensive barriers of coldness and reserve she had erected against the advances of her noble neighbours.

Besides, her authority had already ample exercise in restraining the turbulence of her son. Arthur was now grown into a fine young man, with a head and heart glowing with impetuosity; and a struggle for mastery soon arose between them. Mrs. Armytage, among her masculine propensities, cherished a strong, sturdy, wholesome ambition. She felt that her

son, in his heirship to fifteen thousand a-year, possessed a stake in the country, entitling him to pretend to a place in its representation; and, in order to add the qualifications of mind to those of body and estate, it was her desire that, on leaving College, he should address himself to the study of the law. But Arthur was inflexible: he was willing enough to promise to "come forward," at some future time, for the neighbouring borough of Thoroton, for he thought "franking letters would be devilish good fun, and had a project of his own about farming the mail-roads, which he should thus have an opportunity of bringing before Parliament." But as to studying in the Temple —he, Arthur Armytage—the gayest man of Ch. Ch.,—the man whose bills with Milton, Hudson, and Baron Stulz, might, on attaining his majority, have added a farm to his estate —the thing was preposterous! His cronies, Dumbarton and Lord Edward Brereton, were gone into the Life-Guards, and into the Life-

Guards he must go!—Of age, and competent in fortune, there was no resisting this determination; and Mrs. Armytage, unenlightened by London-seasoning, touching the habits and recommendations of His Majesty's Household Brigade, and measuring the pretensions of the gallant corps in which her son had written himself down a Cornet, by those of certain regiments of the line, quartered aforetime in her neighbourhood, could by no means reconcile herself to his outburst of heroism. She hated the notion of a son of hers galloping after the King's coach, or wasting his days lounging out of a window in Whitehall; and Arthur, whose limited fortune was already impaired, saw that there was not the slightest chance of the enlargement of his means by any concession from his mother's liberality. She purchased for herself a new set of bays on the day of his presentation at Court; but vouchsafed not to add so much as a charger to his outfit—braving the imputation of parsimony

for the satisfaction of marking her displeasure.

And now, after thwarting her in the choice of a profession, this only son was about to thwart her in the choice of a wife! He, to whom she had so often expressed her disapproval of early marriages, was about to throw himself away on a girl without fortune, without family—or rather, *with* a family! But there was no use in discussing the subject: Arthur had proposed, been accepted, and admitted his engagements to his mother. All he had now to do was to sit in patient humility, and watch her working her deliberate way through her breakfast, with a degree of gravity becoming a Chancellor of the Exchequer in the examination of his Treasury accounts; and then, back to London—back to Baker-Street—back to Marian, with what appetite he might!

Poor Sophy, meanwhile, trembling with anxiety to learn the issue of his private conference

with her mother, kept mistaking tea for coffee and coffee for tea, in her presidency over the duties of the table; auguring ill from the obstinate silence of Mrs. Armytage, yet dreading to hear the sound of her voice. Scarcely a word passed between them during the continuance of the meal. It was not till Simmons and the newspapers arrived, and his mistress received from his hand no fewer than five letters,—all of which, as Arthur rightly conjectured, bore reference, remote or proximate, to his marriage,—that she rose in all the rustling dignity of her *gros-de-Naples*, and indignation, to quit the apartment.

"I conclude you will immediately return to London?" said she to Capt. Armytage, as she reached the door. "As you are of age and independent, I fancy my signature will be needless in your marriage settlements. If I am mistaken, let me hear from Messrs. Pennett and Nibwell. Hardywood is waiting for me in the study, so that I shall not see you again before you quit the house. Good morning."

"Good morning, mother!"—answered her son, in as pacific a voice as he could command; —but feeling deeply,—bitterly,—that the kindness and watchfulness of four-and-twenty years were already obliterated from his mind by the display of such repellent reserve at so eventful a moment of his existence.

Had it not been for the soothing influence of his good and gentle sister, he might, perhaps, have been tempted to indulge in expressions of resentment, only more fatally injurious to his future prospects. But Sophy implored him to forbear; and who could resist the mild persuasive voice of Sophy Armytage?

CHAPTER IV.

Jack Falstaff with my familiars; John with my brothers and sisters.

SHAKSPEARE.

IN the present frame of European society, virtue and vice are no longer "ultimate facts;" there are virtues and vices for every station and degree. For an Honourable John Percy, for instance, to be called "Jack Percy," implies the currency of good fellowship in the world of fashion; but for a Mister Baltimore, of Baker-street, to be called "Jack Baltimore," infers decided disorderliness of morals or finances. Such a Jack must needs be a man cunning in the odds, expert at billiards, addicted to punch, knowing in horseflesh, the very Samuel Johnson of the slang dictionary: and unfortunately, the father of Arthur Armytage's Marian was commonly called "Jack"

—a Jack with a small and decreasing income, and a large and increasing family!

Mrs. Baltimore, though not in her turn called Jill, was scarcely a more eligible connexion than her husband. Well born, but endowed only with a very pretty face, she had eloped in a tandem, at sixteen; expecting to live with her dear Baltimore the same dressy, noisy, mail-driving, racketing life, she had seen him living at the watering-place where their ill-starred acquaintance originated. But Jack, disappointed in his notion of having married an Irish heiress, wisely judged that bachelor pleasures are by no means calculated for conjugal participation. He did not choose that there should be a *Mrs.* Jack; and Mrs. Baltimore, accordingly, being totally deficient in the qualifications which inspire a woman

"Well-order'd home man's best delight to make,"

became a dawdle and a slattern. Finery she could *not* renounce; but poverty willed that it should be faded and shabby finery;—and

ringlets and rouge combined with soiled satins and rumpled linen, to endow her with an air, the last a well-thinking woman would wittingly incur.

Still, with all her offences to the eye, there was something not wholly despicable in Mrs. Baltimore. She was a doating mother to the ten children, whose necessities encroached so largely on her luxuries; and much as she loved a smart cap or showy gown, willingly resigned all, to afford a good tilbury and a fine horse to her dear Jack, whom *she* alone, by the way, of all the world, called Baltimore!

The society of such a house, as may easily be conjectured, was any thing but select. A few young noblemen in their nonage were occasionally to be seen at Jack Baltimore's, who, on attaining their majority, were heard of there no more;—but for the most part, the circle was composed of "coaching," smoking, fancy sort of men,—each with his terrier or his bull

dog familiarly at his heels;—each having his good song, or his good story, appropriately his own;—each the best fellow in the world, and each incessantly involved in squabbles with the fellow-creatures his inferiors. Fortunately for Mrs. Baltimore, strong conjugal and motherly affections had preserved her in morals and reputation free from blemish, amidst such injurious associations; but they had not tended to improve her manners or refine her mind. All these best fellows in the world were heartily welcome to her house. They evinced no disgust towards her slipshod habits;—were ever ready to lend their sticks or whips to her seven little boys, and to swear by George or the Lord Harry, that her baby was the most promising puppy of the kennel!

We have described Mrs. Baltimore's better propensities; her ruling foible was an ardent aspiration after fashion. She knew that, as the wife of a sporting man, and still more as the mother of his large family, she could not pre-

tend to much enjoyment of the pomps and vanities of the world. Still, she could not refrain from bending a wistful eye upon the ball-describing details of the Morning Post, or the flashy *vis-à-vis* that rolled along beneath her windows; although without exactly wishing that heaven had made her Baltimore such another man as the yellow nabob whose hoards were the origin of that gaudy hammer-cloth; or of those banquets with their plateaux of gold. It was, therefore, a great delight to her when her sister, Mrs. Dyke Robsey, who, instead of marrying a Jack, had married a Jacob, came to settle in a handsome house in Portland Place, on occasion of her husband's taking his seat in Parliament; for although Jack Baltimore expressed an opinion that a man who, with ten thousand a year drove job horses, and had his carriages turned out by a bargain-builder in the borough, "was not worth his salt," Mrs. B. saw in her sister's opera-box, equipages, and gorgeous establish-

ment, an endless source of pride and pleasure to the family.

Let us do her justice!—it was *not* of herself she thought, but of her pretty Marian —her promising Marian, who was now leaving the school at which it had cost her mother so many personal sacrifices to place her; and as Mrs. Dyke Robsey was almost as good-natured a woman as her more prolific sister, it was soon settled among them that, instead of taking possession of the attic destined to her use in Baker-street, Miss Baltimore, however humbly brought up by her parents, should be "brought out" by her aunt with all the advantages derivable from ostentatious, vulgar, bustling, fussy wealth. Jack, who had sense enough to feel that among *his* companions there was no one he should like to see entangle the affections of his daughter, sanctioned Marian's translation, with a half-grumbling adjuration that "Much good might it do her!"—and

Mrs. Baltimore, when perusing in the morning papers the name of "Mrs. Dyke Robsey, and Miss Baltimore," in the list of the company at the Opera, or at some charity-ball at Willis's, felt herself amply repaid for the sacrifice of her dear girl's aid in making frocks for the children; or her dear girl's company throughout those long evenings, which the "good fellowship" of Jack so often rendered solitary.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Dyke Robsey was never weary of asserting that Marian's beauty produced the greatest sensation, and that she would certainly make a very brilliant match. The first season, however, passed away without any such consummation; for Marian was generously permitted by her father to refuse the offer of a man of some hundreds of thousands; a little old-fashioned creole kinsman of her uncle's, who wore nankin shorts, and looked like some curious shrivelled reptile, imported in spirits from the Caribbees. But

she was only nineteen; and "Marian is sure to make a good match!" was still often and sanguinely repeated,—even in Marian's presence.

She, at least, was unsolicitous on the subject. The good match, so frequently predicted, was chiefly an object of ambition, because she saw that the hearts of her fond mother and kind aunt were set upon her triumph; while her father had more than once assured her that, were *she* to marry "well," it might be the making of her brothers and sisters. All that might be included in that one word "well," Marian could not at first determine. From the moment she became acquainted with Arthur Armytage, her notions of "marrying well" became fixed as fate. She now perfectly understood the meaning of the term! To marry "well" was to marry a captain in the Life-guards, of ancient family, heir to a fine property in Yorkshire;—gay as herself, candid as herself, and if less fortunate in the tender-

heartedness of a mother, Miss Baltimore at present knew nothing of the deficiency.—From the first time he sought her as a partner,—(and Marian had lain awake the remainder of the night, pondering over every word addressed to her by the young soldier in the course of the memorable quadrille)—her fate was sealed. She felt that her future happiness must depend on becoming the wife of one who was at once so gentle and so sprightly, so refined yet so *un-fine;* and as Arthur was equally prompt in pinning his trust upon the purity of nature which, in spite of two seasons in town and the chaperonage of a Mrs. Dyke Robsey, sent the blushes so warmly into his partner's cheek, whenever he hazarded a compliment somewhat tenderer than the routine of ball-room common-place—she was not long kept in suspense. The Robseys, fully appreciating the advantages of such an alliance for their protégée, invited him to Portland Place, gave him the best of

dinners, and the *élite* of their muscovado "fashionables" as his fellow guests; and Arthur, still more and more enchanted by the beautiful girl who was undisguisedly still more and more enchanted by his homage, evinced the most praiseworthy deference for the aunt in her gold-tissue turban, and silver-tissue gown; no less than for the little diminutive, wheezy Mr. Dyke Robsey, who, having been wrapped in cotton during the first six months of his life, had for the remaining sixty years been swathed in furlongs of fleecy hosiery, to render his attenuated frame tolerably equal in volume to the average of the human race; and who with a "*petit filet de voix*," which had never attained sufficient vigour to frighten a canary-bird, had considered it a duty due to his thousands a-year to buy his way into parliament.

Having constantly seen Miss Baltimore domiciliated with these weak but worthy people, Arthur flattered himself she was an orphan.

He liked the thoughts of marrying an orphan, —an orphan without brothers or sisters; who would have no one but himself to love, and who *would* love him so dearly; who would find a parent in his mother, and a sister in Sophy; and it was a great disappointment, on making his proposal to the nineteenth part of a man which called itself Jacob Dyke Robsey, Esq., M.P., for the hand of his niece, to be referred to Mr. and Mrs. Baltimore, of Baker-Street, and to be introduced to the nine little Baltimores. Jack, in his single-breasted coat,—Jack, so well known at Tattersall's,—Jack, with a heavy book for the Derby,—Jack, who, with a gripe of the hand and a slap upon the shoulder, told him he was a devilish fine young fellow, and heartily welcome to his daughter—struck him with consternation; for now, for the first time, he reflected on the fastidiousness of his mother! The picture of proud, well-built, well-ordered, airy Holywell, rose like an exhalation before his mind's eye, as he sat in the

littered drawing-room in Baker Street, full of children and bird-cages; with Mrs. Baltimore, attired in all her tawdry best, and excited by the joy of the moment into a flightiness of speech which he was not skilled to trace to its true origin. Never did he so warmly wish that his lovely Marian had been an orphan!

It was on that day he wrote to his sister. It was in the course of that evening that Jack, who accounted a rattle in a well-horsed mail or post-chaise among the recreations of life, strongly advised his son-in-law elect to get the start of rumour, and make the best of his way to Holywell. Knowing Mrs. Armytage by report only, as having warned off the hounds from her estates, he settled it that she must be a "queer one;" and succeeded in starting Arthur on the Great North Road, to smooth down her queerness by telling his own story. At one moment, he even talked of bearing his future son-in-law company in the expedition;

but this, young Armytage was obliged to negative as hazardous to its success.

"I knew that girl would be the making of the family, God bless her!" cried Jack to his wife, giving his hearty benediction to Marian on her return to Portland Place, after the departure of her lover. "I like the chap she has picked up prodigiously. I went with him to his stables, this afternoon; and a cleverer thing than that bay pony of his I never set eyes on."

"He seems very good-tempered," replied Mrs. Baltimore.

"The pony?"

"No! Captain Armytage. He has promised to take Harry and Billy to the Opera, as soon as he returns from Yorkshire."

"Better take them to Astley's; there is some sense in that! I don't much like what I hear of the old mother. Tom Warley was hunting down in that country last season, and *he* tells me she is a devil of a Tartar!"

"I trust she won't be unkind to dear Marian. There is no occasion for the young people to live with her."

"The question is what she will give 'em to live on elsewhere. They can't do with less than two thousand a-year. Armytage won't hear of remaining in the army; and as I've been telling him since dinner, the best thing he can do is to settle in a snug box, somewhere where the sporting's good and come-at-able; and with a good horse or two in his stable, a good bottle of wine in his cellar, and a spare bed for a friend, he will be the happiest fellow in the world! And, then, when the old lady drops,—there he is, plump into a splendid property! But, as I said to him to-night, if they should happen to fall out in the mean time, there will be no chance of the estate *falling in.* Ha! ha! ha!"

"But why *should* they fall out?" eagerly inquired Mrs. Baltimore, more interested in

her daughter's happiness than her husband's jocularity.

"Oh! I don't know! If the dowager's so stuck up as they say, she mayn't think it a good match for her son."

"A good match, indeed!"

"Why you see, my dear, I've told this young chap, as I've told 'em all, whoever marries Marian must take her in ——"

"Hush! my dear Baltimore! You *do* use such expressions. But as the Captain is so rich, he don't want fortune in a wife; and as to merit and cleverness, where will he find Marian's equal? Such a daughter,—such a sister; and *did* you hear her sing the 'Light Guitar,' this evening? It was equal to Miss Inverarity! And then for family ——"

"*My* father was one of the first clothiers in Gloucestershire, and your's was an Irish Baronet; I don't know what the old lady can reasonably wish for more. And yet ——"

"Well, well!" ejaculated Mrs. Baltimore, puffing out the supernumerary lights which had graced the drawing-room in honour of the illustrious courtship in the family, "let the old lady only *see* Marian, and there will be an end of her opposition! Moving in the first circles, as the girl has been doing along with the Robseys, it is hard if she is not fit company for the widow of a Yorkshire 'squire."

"I would advise the widow of the Yorkshire 'squire to find her so," retorted the angry father, "or I may perhaps be tempted to make her better acquainted with the name and nature of Jack Baltimore."

CHAPTER V.

I'll be thine, my fair,
Or not my mother's. To this I am most constant,
Though destiny say, No!—

SHAKSPEARE.

SUCH were the expectations which it became Arthur's ungracious office to undeceive, on his return from Holywell. Of course he made the best of his story, but it was a hard story to make the best of. "His mother did not *interdict* his marriage; his mother entertained no prejudice against the Baltimore family, for she had never heard of them till on occasion of his attachment. But she did not approve of his marrying so young—she did not approve of his quitting the army—she would do nothing to promote the match."

"Will *give* nothing, you mean?" interrogated Jack, coming to the point.

"I fear not."

"And you have of your own ——"

"Not five hundred a-year" (which, being interpreted, meant little more than four); "but we might live very happily on five hundred a-year," added Armytage, gaining courage from the silence of the parents.

"*We* had not so much, when *we* settled in life," sighed Mrs. Baltimore, arranging her gilt bracelets.

"Times were different then;—and *we* had no situation in life to keep up."

"There is no personal sacrifice I would not make," observed Armytage, turning a deaf ear to the latter explanation, "in order to secure Marian's comfort."

"And Marian is the least expensive creature in the world!—She never wants anything," cried Mrs. Baltimore; forgetting that her daughter's wants had been hitherto forestalled by the liberality of the Robseys.

"Well, we must see about it; there will be

no harm in waiting!" said Jack, not a little damped in his ardour for the match by this change of stakes.

"*Waiting?*" interrupted Armytage, who saw the utmost harm in leaving his precious Marian in the society of her own family. "Pray do not talk of waiting!"

"I am sure a long engagement would break poor Marian's heart," added the mother, with perfect simplicity.—"She is such a nervous, susceptible creature!"

"My mother cannot but come round," interposed Arthur; "I am an only son; and when once she knows that the marriage is irremediable, she will do all that is right and handsome."

"Old women are so deuced obstinate!" cried Jack; "'tis like pulling at a hard-mouthed colt."

"If, therefore," resumed Arthur, colouring deeply at the latter observation, so much at variance with the reverence he was in the

habit of testifying towards his mother—"if *you* will but give your consent, the sooner we are married the better. Time will bring all things straight."

The axiom was one of established authority; but before he ventured on a definitive answer, Jack had two or three Toms, Dicks, and Bobs, whom he chose to consult about marrying his daughter, as he would have done about selling his horse. But Tom, Dick, and Bob, remembering how many fillies friend Jack had still at grass, were strongly in favour of the alliance. The Robseys were next referred to; and Mrs. Dyke, who had set her heart upon giving a "déjeûner *à la fourchette*," as the newspapers politely call a luncheon, to the happy pair at her splendid mansion in Portland Place, would not hear of a postponement. Nay, finding the great lady of Holywell so remiss, the Robseys even ventured on the presentation of a hundred per annum to their niece, which they would have scarcely thought

worth offering, had Mrs Armytage done justice to her son: Mrs. Dyke Robsey superadded the gift of a handsome set of topazes to the bride, purchased on the very day of Arthur's proposals; while Mr. Dyke Robsey promised a new carriage to the young couple, a promise which tended to accelerate their union,—for Jack immediately set off for Long-acre, to give orders, and superintend the building of a "capital charott."

In short the thing was to be!—Arthur, dreading to encounter the mess-raillery of his brother officers, accepted the first terms offered for his commission; the proceeds of which formed a handsome addition to his fortune; and when, after a considerable expenditure of arithmetic, and fifty pounds-worth of conference with the lawyers, it was ascertained that Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Armytage would begin the world with an income of six hundred and twenty pounds a-year, Mrs. Baltimore observed with a sigh, that so long as

they had no family, they might do wonderfully well.

Arthur did not think it necessary to inform them that it was his own fault the six did not amount to eight; that his excellent sister had remitted a deed making over to him two hundred a year of her own fortune; with an earnest assurance that, as all her wants and wishes were amply provided for by her mother, his acceptance would only prevent her from becoming a hoarder. But Arthur knew, or suspected, to what object his sister's hoardings were dedicated; and would as soon have thought of robbing a church as of profiting by her disinterestedness. Besides, he had still full faith in his mother. He wrote to her firmly, but respectfully, to announce the completion of the arrangements for his marriage. He was too proud to implore her sanction, fearing the prayer might be interpreted into an appeal to her generosity; and as she remained silent, and as Sophy gave him little

encouragement to hope for any immediate concession in his favour, the ceremony was performed; Mr. and Mrs. Dyke Robsey's raised pies and decorated hams were duly eaten and commended, and the bride and bridegroom despatched upon a tour to the continent. If it had not been that Jack Baltimore (seeing double from the effects of his brother-in-law's Champagne, and leaning over the balcony to ascertain what sort of a turn-out did honour to the Acre and to his inventive genius)—predicted that the off-leader of the four posters would prove a bolter, there was no fault to be found with the wedding.

Meanwhile, Sophy Armytage's position was far from being of an enviable nature. During those six weeks of suspense, although her mother knew her to be in almost daily communication with Arthur, not a word was uttered by Mrs. Armytage expressive of interest or curiosity in his measures. From that unlucky morning, when Sophia, unwisely following her

brother's directions, had kept secret the subject of his momentous epistle, their mother had scrupulously refrained from interference in their correspondence. She had expressed her opinion concerning his projected marriage, forcibly and unreservedly. It had remained for him to decide between following her advice, or his own rash inclinations; and the result had demonstrated the extent of his filial duty and affection. Fifty times a day did Mrs. Armytage remind herself that since his passion for Miss Baltimore had obtained the ascendency, it was not for a woman of her principles to sanction so flagrant an example of family insubordination.

But much as she laboured to maintain her ordinary aspect and demeanour, Sophy could not but notice that her mother's feelings were powerfully excited. Mrs. Armytage's fine commanding countenance, indeed, remained unruffled. She came and went as usual;—busied herself with the affairs of the country

and the county, the parish, the farm, the household;—but there was irritability in all her gestures, restlessness in all her proceedings. She accepted engagements in the neighbourhood, gave dinners and received them;—but Sophy was grieved to observe the incoherence which absence of mind tended to impart to her discourse, usually so luminous with sense and meaning. People might now contradict her as they pleased,—she had no spirit for argument. Even when Mr. Wemmersley vented his covert sneers upon the agricultural system adopted at her pet farm, she bore his taunts,—she bore his blunders;—she suffered ignorance itself to be a plummet over her!

As a climax to Sophia's sorrows, she began to fancy that her mother's health was giving way under the susceptibility of her temper. The countenance of Mrs. Armytage frequently bore evidence at breakfast that she had not closed her eyes through the night. She was at once feverish and languid; *she* who had never

in her life experienced a head-ache, or consulted a physician! It is true, she still protested she was well,—never better;—and expressed such vehement displeasure when Sophy hinted at the propriety of consulting the apothecary, that a stranger might have been deceived concerning the extent of her ailments. But the eye of an affectionate daughter is not so easily blinded. Following the indications of her own noble and womanly nature, Sophy fancied that her mother might be repenting her severity, and that she needed only a pretext for displaying milder dispositions towards her son. But having hazarded a few words expressive of Arthur's uneasiness on her account, and the desire of all their friends that a reconciliation might take place, Mrs. Armytage replied with so much sternness that "There could be no reconciliation where there had been no estrangement;—that she was not in the habit of exposing her family affairs to the suffrage of her acquaintance," and added in so decisive a tone—"If you

wish that things should go on well between us, Sophy, evince for the future your sense of duty by refraining from all allusion to this forbidden subject!"—that Miss Armytage admitted the impossibility of any further attempt.

Sophy had the vexation, too, of suspecting that every one was in combination against her brother. The Holywell servants, for instance, were of a class only to be met with in opulent provincial families, who do not indulge in yearly migration to London.—As much a part of the house as the turret-clock of the offices, —weatherworn in body and moss-grown in faculties, like the very walls of the ancient mansion. Most of them were servitors of the parents of Mrs. Armytage,—had seen *her* born as well as her children; and looked up to her with a veneration somewhat similar to that lavished by the Russian nation on their mother, their beloved "*matouschka*," Imperial Catherine. That a child of the house, a son, an heir,

should have ventured on such a step as marriage, in direct contradiction to her will, appeared to *them* flat blasphemy; and the old deaf housekeeper, the old blind steward, the old lame lady's maid, the old asthmatic cook, the old drunken coachman, the old toothless housemaid, protested, in unanimous chorus, against his filial ingratitude! Master Arthur was unpardonable; the steward's room passed an unhesitating vote of censure upon his conduct!

At that critical juncture, the business of the stables, or, perhaps, business of his own devising, took the drunken head coachman to Doncaster; and *who* better known at Doncaster than Jack Baltimore—and what more urgent on the landlord of the Flying Childers, himself an out-pensioned dependant of the Holywell family, than to apostrophize John Coachman with a Jeremiad over the decadence of their master's house? All that Jack had ever done or left undone—all his dishonoured bills—all his bets disputed—all that is inva-

riably said or insinuated against a man not rich enough to buy the favour of the rabble—not powerful enough to silence their slanders, or virtuous enough to defy them—was said and insinuated against Arthur's father-in-law; and the list of delinquencies strangely jumbled together and fermented by the process of a twenty miles' jog homewards after the absorption of little less than a gallon of strong October, produced a family portrait of a hero, within a crime or two of deserving the canonization of the Newgate Calendar!

The sketch was soon unfolded by this double-sighted youth of sixty-four to the toothless housemaid, by the toothless housemaid to the asthmatic cook, by the asthmatic cook to the lame lady's maid, and by the lame lady's maid to the deaf housekeeper; who, by virtue of her infirmity, was privileged to add a few shades of turpitude to Jack Baltimore's vices, ere she laid the sum total before the recognition of the blind steward, the only

menial of the household admitted to the honour of gossiping with his lady; for *he* was the contemporary of 'Squire Maudsley. Old Hardywood's grey hairs were sacred in her eyes as the monument of her father; and when, with tears rolling down his furrowed cheeks, he confided to his beloved mistress that the next Mrs. Armytage of Holywell would have a scamp for her father, the present Mrs. Armytage had not courage to silence his lamentations.

"Hardywood can have no prejudices against these Baltimores; Hardywood has no filial ingratitude to resent against your brother," said she, when recapitulating to Sophia the evidence of the old steward, "and *he* admits that this fellow, by whom Arthur has been taken in to marry his daughter, is little better than a swindler!"

A still harder trial awaited her when she went to pass a few days at Greta Castle, soon after the newspaper announcement of the event

in her family. Conscious of the former ungracious coldness of her demeanour towards the Rotherhams, she could not help feeling, as she drove along the avenue, that now was their time to triumph over her—*now* that they saw her defeated alike in the maintenance of her parental authority, and her careful conservation of the purity of her family connexions—*now* was the time for the house of Greta to oppress her with the magnitude of its superiority.

But Mrs. Armytage reckoned without her host—without her hostess. Lord Rotherham met her, as was his courteous custom, at the foot of the great staircase, and instead of affecting lofty ignorance of what had been passing at Holywell, or (in the style of Mr. Wemmersley) a magnanimous determination to see the thing in its best light, he observed in a low voice, as she leaned on his arm to ascend the stairs, "Believe me, I am truly grieved that so old a neighbour should have expe-

rienced the vexation I know you must have been undergoing. Arthur has disappointed us all. For now the business is over, I may own to you, my dear Madam, without indelicacy, that both Lady Rotherham and myself *had* cherished a remote hope of his becoming our son-in-law. Laura and your son had been playfellows from children; and—but it is useless now to talk of it!" he continued, pressing her arm—when he saw that, for once in her life, his stern neighbour was almost affected to tears; and Lady Rotherham, guessing what had been their subject of conversation when her husband and Mrs. Armytage approached, added in a feeling voice, as she pressed her hands to welcome her to the Castle—"It ought not to have happened to *you*, who have been so exemplary a mother!"

What a lesson for Mrs. Armytage; knowing, as she did, how harshly her jealous pride had uttered an interdiction to Arthur, four

years before, against the frequency of his visits to Greta Castle! Suspecting him to be attaching himself to Lady Laura, she dreaded lest her aristocratic neighbours should for a moment imagine her intent upon forming an alliance with the family. "I will not have you continually inviting Lord Greta to Holywell; he will imagine we are making up to him on Sophy's account!" she had imperiously observed to Arthur. "Nor can anything be more unsatisfactory to me, than that you should pass your life at the Castle, exposing us to the degradation of letting people suppose you intend to make your appearance in the county under sanction of Lord Rotherham's patronage!"

Yet these Rotherhams were the very people who, without the smallest drawback of affectation or selfishness, frankly came forward to avow their disappointment that Arthur Armytage had not proposed to their rich and beautiful daughter.

Sophy felt deeply for her mother. She saw that the proud woman was immeasurably lessened in her own esteem by the superior generosity of the Rotherhams. They had proved themselves nobler than herself.

CHAPTER VI.

Be it remembered that whoever envies another, confesses his superiority; and let those be reformed by their pride, who have lost their virtue.

JOHNSON.

"I NEVER saw any one look more completely down in the mouth than poor Mrs. Armytage at dinner to-day!" said Wemmersley, of Mill Hill, to his wife, as they were returning home together on the night of Mrs. Armytage's visit to Greta Castle.

Mrs. Wemmersley answered nothing. Being one of the fastidious, she was grieved to hear a husband of hers give utterance to such an expression as "down in the mouth!" He had no right to indulge in such vulgarisms, while she, so elegantly attired, and so intimate a friend of the Duchess of Spalding, was sitting primly by his side.

"After all, you see, our friend Mrs. Armytage's pretensions are beginning to find their own level," he resumed. "Hitherto she has evidently thought herself the first person in this part of the country."

"The Duchess of Spalding declares she would as soon associate with a corporal of dragoons!"

"Electioneering pique! The Duchess knows the old lady wants Arthur to stand for Thoroton, against Leicester Spalding. But really the authority Mrs. Armytage has long affected to assume among us, was growing unbearable. Her pride has now received a check; and we shall have her on our own terms."

"I made it a point to inquire of Sophy this evening, (when I knew *she* must overhear me,) how her mother kept up her spirits through this disagreeable affair; and whether it would be possible for them ever to visit such people as the Baltimores? But while she hesitated what to answer, Lord Greta, whose conversa-

tion with her I had interrupted, observed, 'Why not? In this world, circumstances compel one to be acquainted with such very odious people!' Which certainly was treating the connexions of the Armytages more cavalierly than even I should have ventured."

"Are you quite sure the impertinence was intended for them?" inquired Mrs. Wemmersley, sensitively. "Greta is such a strange, dry fellow, that I hardly know what to make of him!"

"Sophy Armytage evidently thought so, for she gave him *such* a reproachful look!"

"*That* does not re-assure me. Miss Sophia affects magnanimity. And either that love-affair between her and his friend Edgar Rainsford, or his own friendship for her brother, or some other cause, which I suppose they understand, has caused a prodigious intimacy between Lord Greta and the young lady."

"I am sure I don't wonder; he is so charming, so conciliating, so considerate. He never

meets me without inquiring all sorts of particulars concerning the progress of my greenhouse."

"Yes; that he may have the gratification of hearing you play Mrs. Malaprop with the botanical names."

"You put such strange misconstructions on things. It was only to-day, at dessert, he made me give him the whole account of our tour in Switzerland last autumn."

"Elinor, you had better take care of Lord Greta. You are just the sort of person on whom he would delight in playing off his mystifications."

"What do you mean? What sort of person?"

"Oh! no matter! He tried once or twice with *me*, but found me too hard for him. To-day, for instance, when I asked him 'what news from town?' he pointed to the papers lying on the table, and said he had not found time to read the great letters; to which I re-

plied, that 'since I had discovered the great letters to be written by the Treasury Secretaries, I never found time to read them at all.' You may suppose that my young Lord Sec. looked rather blue! As if I intended to learn from *him* the stale news to be found in the public prints!"

"I see what you mean *now;* but I defy him to make a fool of *me,*' said Mrs. Wemmersley, as the carriage stopped at the lodge-gates of Mill Hill. "I defy him."

"And so do I," muttered her husband, helping her up the steps of the little portico; and at very little trouble to conceal his contempt for his silly affected wife. "But at all events, take my advice, and beware of Lord Greta and his sister."

This caution, however, was superfluous. The young people at Greta Castle only despised Mrs. Wemmersley for the ignorance and inanity which rendered her society so wearisome and unprofitable; it was only Wemmersley whom,

though clever and well-informed, they really *disliked*. Wemmersley was a mean-minded man. Envy was the gnawing-worm that rendered his form so spare and his soul so cankered. With a fortune of two thousand a-year, good health, and good character, he might have been pronounced without a care, without a want. Yet he was miserable; from mere covetousness of the position or possessions of every man of his acquaintance! The two friendships which he happened to form at college, had proved the bane of his happiness through life. His chum, Sir George Lumley, having married a very pretty woman, Wemmersley, bent upon securing a prettier, had united himself to a fool; while his other crony, Harry Vincent, having inherited a hunting-box in Bedfordshire, Wemmersley, unable to support the sight of his shrubberies and paddocks, had immediately purchased Mill Hill to complete the measure of his misfortunes.

Mill Hill was doubtless intended as a place

of purgatory for an envious man. Fifty acres, jammed in between the fine property of Mrs. Armytage and the noble estates of the Earl of Rotherham. Fifty acres, overlooked from the lofty height of Greta Castle, and covered in from public observation by the spreading woods of Holywell. Mrs. Armytage's park-wall ruined the view from its sloping lawn, while an unsightly farm of Lord Rotherham's disturbed the symmetry of its pleasure-grounds. Wemmersley's pride was hurt at every turn; and the soreness of his selfishness constantly rubbing against the superiority of his neighbours, caused the unfortunate man to lead a life of penance. Mill Hill, gay, pretty, elegant—Mill Hill inflicted as severe mortifications on its owner as the humiliations of the workhouse on some high-spirited pauper! But Wemmersley had one consolation in *his* woes: either Lord Rotherham or Mrs. Armytage would have given a large sum to have bought him out. Mill Hill, an object of importance

to the estates of both, had been disposed of without their knowledge, by a Thoroton attorney of the name of Gumption, who owed them an election grudge; and Wemmersley was chiefly induced to retain the property by his secret certainty, that the proud proprietors of Greta and Holywell never passed his gates without longing to pull them down, and incorporate his well-wooded paddock within their own ring-fence! Yes! he was an object of envy! What a consolation for one so much a martyr to that embittering passion!

For it is by no means indispensable for an envious person to appreciate the thing he envies; sufficient for him that it should be coveted by others! The regard of Mrs. Armytage, accordingly, was desirable to Wemmersley, because he observed that the Rotherhams and others of their common neighbours were ambitious of her good graces; nor could he bear, on the other hand, to see a larger portion of the courtesies of the Rotherhams

dispensed to Mrs. Armytage than to himself. He, accordingly, never omitted an occasion of exciting the inflammable temper of the latter against their neighbours at Greta Castle, or neglected an opportunity of proving to Lord and Lady Rotherham, that Mrs. Armytage was undeserving their esteem.

But *there* he was less successful! Lord Rotherham's temper was as serene as his mind was honourable. It was difficult to make *him* see things in a distorted shape. Honouring Mrs. Armytage as a valuable member of the community, a conscientious steward of the gifts of Providence, and, moreover, a staunch Whig like himself, (for political opinions form, after all, one of the strongest bonds of modern amity,) he was not to be shaken in his friendship by the insinuations of a tale-bearer. Besides, his son Greta dearly loved Arthur Armytage, and his daughter Laura, Sophia; nay, he sometimes fancied that these reciprocal attachments went further still; and that Lord

Greta and Sophy, and Arthur and Lady Laura, were likely to cement a nearer alliance between the families. He desired nothing better. To see his daughter settled at Holywell, within half an hour's ride of her family, as the wife of a plain, honourable and, (as he never failed to add,) Whig country gentleman, would have gratified every desire of his honest heart; and as to his son-in-law, although he could have desired that Lord Greta's marriage might have done somewhat more towards the extension of his family dignities, he had not a word to urge against so pleasing and so highly-principled a girl as the daughter of Mrs. Armytage of Holywell.

But whatever might be the views of the Earl, those of the soft-eyed Sophia were of a different nature. She had already disposed of herself. She was *not* engaged—had never even received a proposal, (except from one rash Cornet of Dragoons, who had invited her to become his for ever and ever, as Cornets

do, after three days' acquaintance at Doncaster Races,) and yet she was as much disposed of as if seriously betrothed. Edgar Rainsford, her brother Arthur's chosen friend and vacation companion, too sensible to her merits to disguise his passionate admiration, too poor to venture on a tender of his hand to the daughter of Mrs. Armytage, was working his way to distinction, and through distinction to fortune, encouraged by the hope of finding in Sophia's preference his exceeding rich reward; and though not a word in admission of mutual attachment had been uttered on either side, each had perfect confidence in the constancy of the other. With respect to Arthur's passion for Lady Laura, time had already proved the fallacy of Lord Rotherham's expectations.

"Your mother is looking very ill, Sophy," said her ladyship to Miss Armytage, as they stood together in the dressing-room of the latter, waiting for the ladies' maids, on the first night of the Armytages' visit to Greta Castle.

"They are gone to the continent, I understand?"

"They are;" replied Sophia, needing no explicit interpretation of her friend's "*they!*" —"Perhaps, under all the circumstances, the best step Arthur could have taken. My mother will be less in the way of hearing them talked about; and by the time they return, her displeasure may have subsided."

Lady Laura shook her head. "A poor chance, in any case! Well—we must hope for the best;—that Mrs. Armytage may not prove too implacable, or Mrs. Arthur too odious!" said she, bending forward to kiss the forehead of her friend, as their attendants approached the door.

"Good night," said Sophia in reply to her salutation. "Oh! my dearest Laura! When I reflect upon the prospects in which I once ventured to indulge on Arthur's account——"

"Not a word on that subject," interrupted Lady Laura, hastily taking up her candle. "It

is not *his* fault, if we were all sillier than he was! But for Mr. Wemmersley's way of wishing us joy on your brother's marriage, I should have forgotten that. But, no matter!" said she, checking herself,—"Let us now go quietly to bed, to *sleep* if we can; without indulging in dreams that may only tend to disturb ourselves and our neighbours."

CHAPTER VII.

Stand not amazed, here is no remedy!—
In love, the heavens themselves do guide the state;
Money buys lands, but wives are sold by fate.

SHAKSPEARE.

MEANWHILE, Arthur Armytage and his bride, hand clasped in hand, were reclining in the "capital charott" as it rolled smoothly along the banks of the Rhine. "Jack" would have found much to commend in the patent axles; Sophia, in the scenery through which they were passing; Arthur and Marian admired nothing, saw nothing, enjoyed nothing but

Their own hearts' most sweet society!

Both were at a time of life when the positive has so limited an influence, and the ideal so wide a range,—when so little of the world is

known and so much conjectured,—that, though there was no end to their speculations, there was a very speedy one to their reminiscences. Neither of them seemed desirous of clinging to the past. Their existence was now beginning; their future all brightness and hope. On Marian's happiness, indeed, there was no drawback; that of Arthur's *did* occasionally receive some check, when a halt at Brussels, Frankfort, or Stutgardt produced letters from England; for Sophia's to himself afforded no prospect of a reconciliation with his mother; while Marian's communications from her family, in which she insisted on his participating, were of a nature to transfix him with dismay. Such a family! If his mother had decided so resolutely against them unknown, unheard, unseen, undreamt of, what would be her abhorrence, when Jack Baltimore had hallooed for half an hour at her elbow; or when she should have perused one of the Cheltenham epistles of Mrs. Dyke Robsey!

"Your aunt seems very fond of gaiety, for her time of life," observed Armytage one day, after listening to Marian's animated account of a pic-nic at Hounslow, "with the officers," which she had enjoyed the preceding season.

"Is she not?—my aunt cannot bear being alone; and Mr. Robsey, you know, counts for next to nothing. Besides, he is almost always taken up with Parliament and that sort of thing."

"I was not aware that he was at all active in the House?"

"*In*, I don't know; but *out*, he is particularly busy. Three or four members used to dine with him three or four times a-week, and they talked of nothing but bills, and motions, and divisions, and I can't tell what."

"Nor they neither, I suspect!—Is Mr. Robsey with government?"

"He has no place under government."

"I know.—But does he vote with ministers?"

"I have not the least idea with whom he votes. But I know that he is constantly saying 'I am all for Railroads and Radical Reform.' He repeats that sentence fifty times a-day, let people be talking of what they please, as if it were an answer to everything; with his little wheezing voice and short dry cough, 'I am all for Railroads and Radical Reform,' you must have heard him say it a thousand times!"

"There is so much difficulty in hearing what he says, poor man;—and I am afraid I never paid much attention to his sayings or doings."

"You are very ungrateful, then. My uncle took a fancy to *you* at first sight. I recollect his observing at breakfast, the morning after you were first introduced to us, and my aunt was telling him what a fine property you had in Yorkshire, 'Well, I hope, with all my heart, it may benefit by some of the new railroads.'"

A jealous pang shot through the heart of Arthur! How very early in his acquaintance with Marian had his fine property in Yorkshire been discussed! How could he tell what share it might have had in biassing her preference!

"Mr. Dyke Robsey, then, is a Radical?" said he, in a petulant voice.

"I do not exactly know, and I should think it was not of much consequence, to himself or anybody else. Only I remember, that, at Brighton, my aunt was always lamenting he was something which prevented our being asked to the Pavilion."

"What absurd nonsense!"

"Yes, very absurd!—As she often said, why should Mr. Robsey's politics affect *her?* —and certainly many of our acquaintance went to the royal balls, who had not half so much right as my aunt, with all her fine diamonds, —and she a Baronet's daughter."

Arthur smiled at the simplicity of his wife.

There is a period of married life when the simplicity of a wife is peculiarly attractive.

"By-the-way," said he, "the O'Moran Baronetcy is extinct, I fancy? Had your grandfather Sir Emilius O'Moran more daughters than your mother and Mrs. Robsey?"

"Oh! there is my uncle Dominick, who lives always in Ireland;—agent, you know, to Lord Balliná;—and then there is my poor uncle Bob, and poor Sir Marcus."

"What uncle Bob?—what poor Sir Marcus?"

"Mamma and my aunt never talk of them if they can help it. My uncle Bob has been in the Limerick Lunatic Asylum these twenty years; and Sir Marcus, you know, has been obliged to reside in America ever since the Rebellion."

"Is it possible?"

"My aunt has been very kind to him; Mr. Robsey settled an annuity on Sir Marcus when he married."

"How very strange that no one should have mentioned their names to me?"

"Not at all. Mamma and aunt are naturally anxious to have them forgotten, for my uncle Dominick's sake; because, perhaps, he might lose his situation, if the history of his family came to Lord Balliná's knowledge."

"I will answer for it," mused poor Arthur in secret, as he threw himself back in the carriage in no very enviable mood of mind, "that by this time Wemmersley has managed to ferret out the whole O'Moran pedigree and to carry it to Holywell. And my mother, who will not even take an Irish servant into her house!"

Another time, when Marian in high spirits had been recounting anecdotes of her gay winter at Brighton, her brilliant season in town, Armytage had the vexation to perceive that her circle of acquaintance was of the class most disagreeable even to himself. During the period of his courtship, the coterie in Portland Place had been comparatively small, and

comparatively select; and either he had not perceived, or had not cared of what material it might be composed. He had, of course, never expected to find the best society frequent such a house as the Robseys. But he was now mortified in the discovery that, as in most instances where great wealth is allied to great want of tact, Mrs. Dyke's good-nature had been imposed upon to accept the acquaintance of every tiger in town; and that, in addition to these tinsel stars, she had been induced, by her unlucky appetite for finery and the fine, to compromise with the want of respectability of a certain number of persons of high birth, who affect to secede from the society of people of their own caste, from which they have been, in fact, ejected as unworthy. Poor Marian's Lords and Ladies were all of very questionable notoriety.

Deeply hurt by the facts thus successively, and as it were, accidentally, brought to his knowledge, Arthur began to get somewhat

uneasy on the score of the former associations of his wife. Trusting that he now knew the worst, he wished to know no more—to *hear* no more. He checked her by a sudden change of subject whenever she recurred to home, and directed her attention with eagerness towards new scenes and new objects, in hopes of storing her mind with new ideas ere she encountered the ordeal of an introduction to his mother.

And the pretty little bride was easily influenced. The moment Arthur expressed a desire that she would improve herself in French, and join with him in the study of German, she applied herself in right earnest; and soon, if the truth must be told, outstepped the progress of her fellow-student. There was one point meanwhile, on which she needed no encouragement to application. Mrs. Arthur Armytage was, not by nature, but by art—*strictly* by art—a brilliant musician. Very few

professional performers exceeded her in execution on the piano; and though Arthur would have been content to lay Herz and Hummel and their works at the bottom of the Rhine or the Red Sea, he felt it his duty to commend a proficiency which must have cost his wife so much time and diligence to acquire. He only wished in his heart that her performance had not so much resembled the gabbling of a parrot. He admitted to himself, that the more Marian's temper and disposition developed themselves to his acquaintance, the more he saw in her that was honest and endearing; but he also admitted, that it was scarcely possible for him to have selected a wife whose tastes were less congenial with his own, or whose connexions wese less eligible. He thought it strange that all this had never struck him previous to his marriage; but nothing now remained but to make the best of it. He would turn to the bright side of things! Luckily, a bright side existed. Marian was the most docile

well as the as prettiest creature in the world: she needed only a little training; and no one could be trained more easily.

Under such circumstances, nothing could be more reasonable than Arthur's determination to pass the winter abroad, previously to soliciting the notice of his mother for his wife, and settling for life in his own country. Paris would be a very agreeable *séjour* for both of them: Marian might have as much music as she pleased, and mix in society both pleasant and profitable, without hurting his pride by contact with her own family and connexions; and as to himself, "he knew lots of fellows in Paris; he could easily get into the Club; *he* should make it out very well."

In Paris, therefore, they established themselves, and in a handsome style. By the prudent forecast of guardians and solicitors, there is usually a loose sum of money left tangible when two young people marry, under the name

of outfit, which enables them to acquire, during their first year of independence, habits of expenditure they can never afterwards lay aside; and accordingly, the money predestined to procure tables and chairs, plate and linen, for the box in the sporting country, with a good bottle of wine in its cellar, a good horse in its stable, and a spare bed for a friend, (or a father-in-law,) was fated gradually to melt away in Opera-boxes, finery, and the most profitless of unprofitable hospitality.

Still, Arthur fancied he was gaining time. His kind sister, unwilling to distress him by acknowledging the implacable spirit still maintained against him by her mother, constantly wrote that, she trusted "a few more months would effect the re-union of the family;" and aware that, as the winds blow where they list, Mrs. Armytage resented or relented at her own good time and pleasure, he waited—waited patiently. His Club was a pleasant Club—

his wife an affectionate wife—his life agreeable — his prospects not hopeless. There could be no occasion for him to humble himself to the dust at the feet of Mrs. Armytage.

CHAPTER VIII.

The gentleman is learn'd—a most rare speaker—
To tutors none more bound; his training such,
That he may furnish and instruct great teachers.

SHAKSPEARE.

AT Holywell, meanwhile—sober, steady, solemn, oak-shaded Holywell—all proceeded with as much regularity as though its economy were part of the system of the universe. Old Hardywood received the rents for his lady, and Simmons his orders *from* her; and the new park-wall between the west lodge and Woodin's farm (commenced for the purpose of giving employment on the estate) was slowly proceeding; the drainage of Maudsley Moor begun, and the planting of an adjoining heath prepared for. All the activity usually visible on the vast property of a wealthy and wise

proprietor, was perceptible in the occupations of Mrs. Armytage. It seemed almost sacrilege to Sophia, that things could go on so well while Arthur was wandering on the Continent and at variance with her mother.

"Do not make yourself uneasy, my dear young lady," had been Dr. Grant's consolatory admonition. "Your mother has resisted expostulation, has resisted persuasion; her enlightenment must be the work of Providence! and, believe me, the greater her harshness, the more flagrant her injustice, the warmer will be her return towards her son. Let her exhaust her indignation. Mrs. Armytage will end by growing angrier with herself than with *him*."

But Sophy's anxieties soon acquired a new stimulus. By the elevation of one of its sitting members to the peerage, a vacancy having occurred in the representation of the borough of Thoroton, Mrs. Armytage sent off an express for the eldest son of her cousin, Sir John Maudsley, of Maudsley Hall, and established

his head-quarters at Holywell for the canvass, without the slightest allusion to her former parliamentary projects in favour of her son! Now Reginald Maudsley was a person on many accounts most objectionable to poor Sophia. Mrs. Armytage, strongly attached to her own family and its interests, and regarding Sir John Maudsley as head of the house, and heir-presumptive to Holywell, in case of failure of her own issue, entertained a high regard for him and all his generation; more especially for Reginald, a young gentleman brought up on the high-pressure-of-intellect system, to know more than the rest of the world, and to despise it in proportion. Betutored from his cradle, the little great man, the embryo Newton, the incipient Lord Chatham, was the most pragmatical of pretenders; dwarfed in his moral nature by the excessive interference of art. But his kinswoman at Holywell saw no faults in him. The regularity of his conduct at college had been no

less edifying than that of poor Arthur Armytage was indiscreet; and when, during their holidays and vacations, Reginald Maudsley joined their parties at Holywell, he was invariably held up to his young cousins as an object for emulation and admiration; from which it naturally followed that Arthur could not endure the sight of his cousin. He called him a prig,—he thought him a hypocrite,—he detested his ostentatious habits of study and moderation. In process of time, Sophy began to dislike him too; for her brother's lively friend, Edgar Rainsford, suspecting, and perhaps with reason, that Mrs. Armytage entertained a project of uniting her daughter with the representative of the elder branch of her family, spared no occasion of showing up the shallow egotism of young Maudsley.

And this was the man who, now that Arthur was banished from Holywell, and his friend Rainsford an absentee from its threshold, was about to be established by her mother's fire-

side, as the rival of her son, and the opponent of Lord Leicester Spalding!

"I wish you had seen Spalding's face this morning, my dear Miss Armytage," said Lord Greta, having accompanied his sister one morning on a visit to Holywell. "As Laura and I rode hither, we met him with his electioneering cavalcade; and when I told him your mother had just driven into Thoroton with her triumphal coach and four, and Maudsley, like a man in buckram, by her side, conning a speech with four quotations from Horace, and three from Juvenal, my sister was obliged to throw him her salts-bottle, to save him from fainting."

"As if your sister carried one!" exclaimed Lady Laura with indignation. "Allow her to leave such fine-ladyisms to Mrs. Wemmersley and the Duchess of Spalding."

"Or Leicester, himself; pray don't forget Lord Leicester—Leicester is the finest lady in the Riding—writes silken verses in the silken

Book of Beauty—and washes his poodle in milk of roses. I quite enjoy the thoughts of Leicester Spalding matched against that polyglot edition of Erasmus, your cousin Reginald!"

"Don't abuse Mr. Maudsley to Sophia," observed Lady Laura. "The Wemmersleys assured me yesterday that she is engaged to her cousin; Mrs. Armytage having disinherited Arthur, and entailed her whole property upon the son and heir of Sir John."

"Under such circumstances, mamma would scarcely choose the Wemmersleys as her confidants," said Sophy, scarcely knowing what to answer.

"Do you imagine," inquired Lord Greta, colouring highly on observing how small a portion of the report Miss Armytage thought proper to disavow, "that Wemmersley waits to be *chosen* as confidant? No, no! Wemmersley knows of every change of ministry before the King; of every vacant mitre before the Arch-

bishop of Canterbury; of every decision in chancery before the mace and seals! He is quicker in his intelligence than courier or king's messenger; nay, when mischief is in the wind, the very telegraph is a snail to him. I should not be much surprised if Wemmersley had already drawn out a draught of the marriage-settlements between the future member for Thoroton and Miss Sophia Armytage."

"I should be much surprised to hear of Miss Sophia Armytage signing them," interrupted Lady Laura, perceiving from her brother's volubility that Wemmersley's report had excited his uneasiness.

"If you saw the Wemmersleys yesterday," interrupted Sophia, "perhaps you can inform me whether their relation, Mr. Lomax, has made his appearance at Mill Hill? My cousin Reginald is anxious for his arrival. I believe they have been in correspondence for some months past concerning the state of prison-discipline in the United States."

"Do you mean a long-limbed man, who wears an immense muslin neckcloth; speaks in aphorisms; maintains a perpetual single combat with what he calls the aristocratic usurpation; and cannot so much as take a pinch of snuff without connecting the measure with some precept of political economy?"

"I never saw Mr. Lomax."

"There, Laura! I told you that bore of a man at Wemmersley's left hand yesterday was a rich relation. I was certain no one less cogently qualified would presume to be so disagreeable."

"Disagreeable? *I* thought him the pleasantest person I had ever met at Mill Hill; so original; so sturdily Yankee; so undisguised in his wonder at Lord Leicester Spalding's languid impertinence; so different from the old-world people, who are careful never to seem astonished! But tell me, Sophia, what does your mother say to Lord Leicester taking up his

quarters at Mill Hill during the election? Is she not indignant against the Wemmersleys?"

"Not in the least. They are people whose offences she overlooks with the greatest indifference; as if too small to excite her anger. When there was a report that Lord Rotherham had taken Lord Leicester Spalding by the hand, then she was indeed angry! If your father had backed him against my cousin Maudsley, I think mamma would have risked half her fortune to secure Reginald's election."

"*Reginald!*"—thought Lord Greta; but he said nothing, though Lady Laura directed a significant glance towards him.

"What news from your brother?" was his well-imagined mode of changing the conversation.

"None that I consider very satisfactory. Arthur and his wife appear to be entering eagerly into the dissipation of Paris, which is

the last thing likely to be satisfactory to my mother."

"Wemmersley assures me he has taken to playing desperately. I never thought Arthur fond of play?" said Lord Greta.

"I never heard of his touching a card!" exclaimed Sophia. "*Play?* No. I am quite certain he is not addicted to play. And yet," continued she, checking herself, "how can I be certain of anything about him *now*, under the influence of a person with whom I am not even acquainted!"

She had no time to inquire further. The Holywell carriage with its utmost complement of postilions and outriders, covered with the ribbons of the "Maudsley for ever" party, drove rapidly past the windows; and the moment her mother and cousin entered the room, Sophy saw by the countenances of both that something was wrong.

"The head-ache which prevented your accompanying us to Thoroton does not appear

to have been very troublesome," said Mrs. Armytage, addressing Sophia in an angry voice, after she had gone through the usual greetings to her young visitors.

"Pray, my dear madam, do not attribute our presence here either to Miss Armytage's convalescence, or her generosity!" hastily interrupted Lord Greta. "We were under the necessity of personally assaulting old Simmons in order to obtain admittance, and of assuring him that his pretext that 'Miss Sophia was lying down' was in every sense a lying one. The pun of course was Laura's, although she affects to look so scandalized!"—he continued, not a little amused to perceive how much his harum-scarum mode of drawing off the enemy from Sophia provoked the lofty contempt of Mr. Candidate Maudsley.

"To own the truth," he added,—resolved to convert the scorn of Reginald into fury,—"I was chiefly anxious to take the entrenchments of Holywell by storm, in order to secure Miss

Armytage's hand for the first dance of the ball which I conclude we shall have at Thoroton in honour of Mr. Maudsley's return."

"But at which, as a matter of course, Sophia would hold herself engaged to her cousin," said Mrs. Armytage haughtily.

"Pardon me!—the prize is mine by all the rules of chivalry and *Beau Nash!*" cried Lord Greta, with a glance that defied Sophia to contradict his assertion. "Priority of demand, priority of assent, pre-engagement! Besides, Miss Armytage was probably as well aware as myself, that Mr. Maudsley, the new member, and Mr. Mandsley, her cousin, are one, but not the same. The successful candidate will, of course, belong to Miss Dip, the daughter of the Mayor, or Miss Gumption, the sister of his attorney, or Miss Eitherside, the cousin of the returning officer. A popular member forgets all kindred and its claims, and during Mr. Mandsley's election week, the majesty of Holy-

well must defer to the majesty of the Blue Boar."

Sophia, dreading an explosion of the wrath which she saw lowering in her mother's countenance, now attempted to conciliate Mrs. Armytage by interesting herself in the result of their canvass. She could not have chosen a more unlucky topic! By the intrigues of the same attorney who had contrived to sell Mill Hill to Mr. Wemmersley, Arthur Armytage had been actually put in nomination for Thoroton! The strife between mother and son must now become apparent to the whole county! A poll had been demanded; and

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was already officially registered!

CHAPTER IX.

He draweth out the thread of his verbosity finer than the staple of his argument. I abhor such fanatical phantasms, such point-device companions, such rackers of orthography!

SHAKSPEARE.

"I AM free to admit that I cannot altogether reconcile to myself the discordant phases of your social and political phenomena!" observed Mr. Leonidas Lomax, the uncle from Carolina, as he sat sipping a cup of weak tea that evening at Mill Hill, with his pocket-handkerchief, a "stout cotton article," protectingly outspread over his nether habiliments, while he sentimentally "colloquized" with his kinsman Wemmersley. "You inform me, Sir, that under the operation of the Reform Bill, Thoroton has become a free and independent borough; and

the inhabitants, I perceive, arrogate to themselves the privileges of independence, by holding meetings of a political tendency; by drinking Radical toasts, and venting free opinions upon the very parliament which has endowed them with a political existence."

"Nothing very new in popular ingratitude," replied Wemmersley, annoyed to perceive that his silly wife's wise uncle had set in for a prose.

"Nothing! admitted! fully admitted, my dear Sir. But that which is very new to me, and at present very incomprehensible, is that the individuals in question, born in a class of life which entitles us to believe them educated, and if educated, enlightened, express week after week, month after month, year after year, their dissatisfaction at the insupportable heaviness of taxation, the overweaning influence of the aristocracy, the corrupsubserviency of the press, the un-apostolic avidity of the clergy, the supine inactivity of

government; yet the moment a lad in a showy coat, with white kid gloves, a full pocket, an empty head, such as the fribble who quitted Mill Hill this morning, stands half-laughing in their faces, half-holding his nose, to demand their sweet voices in favour of his return as their representative to parliament, — *heigh! presto!* they are ready to toss up their caps in his honour, and to cry 'Spalding for ever!'— Twenty thousand souls!—men with beards upon their faces, and accountable to posterity for the conservation of their rights and charters, to invest their civic authority in the person of a gristle-boned, vellum-skinned, flute-voiced automaton; whose business in life is to gild over the iron buttresses of despotism, which uphold the brazen statue of that Moloch, the English Oligarchy; and all, if I rightly interpret the information of my dear niece, Mistress Wemmersley, because the Duchess, his mother, purchases a few ells of fustian for her charity-school, and a few deal-

tables for her laundry, of the retail-traders of the borough! Such conduct is irreconcileable with the impulses of rational man!"

"The Duke of Spalding has the finest property in this part of the country," said Wemmersley, as hastily as he dared. "It is but natural that the people of Thoroton should consult his wishes concerning its parliamentary representation; or that he should prefer a member of his own family, as most devoted to the care of its interest."

"To the care of *his* interests, you mean. To *his* interests, I can well understand this young gentleman, whom I can scarcely call a man, to be thoroughly devoted. I am yet to learn by what process his unstudious ignorance is to be enlightened; or by what art his presumptuous frivolity is to be rendered sedative."

"We will leave it to the electors of Thoroton to determine," said Wemmersley, not venturing to contradict the rich relation whom he could not hope to convince.

"Each of whom will leave it to the other," resumed Leonidas; "and between the stupidity of some and the venality of the rest, your borough will be compromised in the eyes of the country, and contribute its mite to the gradual deterioration of the British character and the retardation of the march of federalism."

"Oh! my dear Sir," cried Mrs. W., snatching at the word character, "indeed, you go too far; Lord Leicester Spalding is a young man of the highest honour; and you know it is something to be represented by a gentleman."

"My notions of the word *gentleman*, and yours, are somewhat at variance, my dear lady. Integrity, for instance, enters indispensably into *my* list of the characteristics of a gentleman; yet, if I rightly understood your friend the young lord, yesterday, in the narrative of his proceedings at the last Newmarket meeting——"

"*Who* breaks a butterfly upon a wheel?" cried Wemmersley. "The boastings of a vapouring boy like Spalding are not to be measured by rule and compass. Besides, he saw your amazement, noted the solemnity of your commentary, and instantly set about mystifying you by a thousand exaggerations."

"'You gentlemen of England, who live at home at ease,' seem to derive wonderful pleasure in insulting more laborious persons, and in misleading seekers after information," continued Lomax, in the same didactic tone. "Since my arrival in the mother-country, whenever I have raised objections to the flightiness of *this* person's conversation, I am assured that he is quizzing me; or expressed misgivings respecting *that* person's veracity"—

"Scarcely a safe subject on which to express mistrust," interrupted Wemmersley, entertaining a shrewd suspicion that his Yankee kinsman alluded indirectly to himself. "To return, however, to Lord Leicester Spalding.

"Pray set your heart at ease respecting his parliamentary dignities—for, by the dextrous manœuvres of one of the most blackguard attorneys in existence, both the Spalding and Maudsley parties are defeated, and Arthur Armytage placed at the head of the poll!"

"Arthur Armytage?—Any relation to that handsome Semiramis-looking woman who called here the other day?"

"Her son,—her only son."

"A young man?"

"Three-and-twenty."

"And freely elected!—Well, she has now just cause for her pride; for proud enough she is, or I am considerably mistaken. I could plainly discern that she despised your house, and everything, and every one within it!"

"Without losing time by proving you mistaken in your last assertion, permit me to set you right concerning your first. Nothing could have been more galling to the pride

of Mrs. Armytage, than the election of her son."

"More quizzing, I calculate," said Lomax with a grim smile.

"Mere matter of fact, I assure you. *She* was the means of bringing forward Mr. Maudsley, and will resent any injury offered to him as offered to herself. I should not be surprised if this electioneering manœuvre of Gumption's were to be the means of perpetuating the dissensions between Mrs. Armytage and her son."

"They are on bad terms, then?"

"So we have reason to conclude. But all we know in the neighbourhood of Mrs. Armytage's private affairs is known but by inference. She never unbends, never unfolds!"

"And what motive does inference lead you to adduce for the ill-will subsisting between your arrogant neighbour, and her son and heir? It cannot be the same natural pride,

my dear Sir, which causes her, for instance, to look down upon yourself? The lineage of which *she* boasts, is his also; the possessions in which she glories, will one day be his own."

"*Ca dépend! dépend!*" interrupted Wemmersley, with a fastidious smile.

"I beg your pardon?"

"I meant to say *that* must depend on circumstances," he rejoined, pettishly.

"If you *meant* to say so, it is a pity but that you *had* said so. The English tongue is a fine and copious language, and needs no interpretation from French gibberish. Although no longer spoken here, with the degree of purity and precision we meet with in the States, where the 'pure well of English undefiled' has descended to us, limpid and uncontaminated, from the Elizabethan age, still I have found many persons in the Old Country, speaking English with tolerable correctness."

"They are infinitely obliged to your indul-

gence!" observed Wemmersley, with a fiery glance, such as might almost have ignited the quid secretly cherished within the lanky cheek of uncle Lomax.

"But, to return to Mrs. Armytage and her family feuds. Has her son been convicted of any moral turpitude, to have provoked her unnatural enmity?"

"I am half afraid of guessing the meaning of your 'English undefiled,'" replied Wemmersley. "Here, in England, perhaps we might be tempted to call the offence of spitting on a lady's carpet, an act of moral turpitude."

"Did the new member for Thoroton offend his parent by spitting on her carpet?" calmly inquired Lomax, defying the sneer directed against him. "I calculate, then, that her abode is insufficiently furnished with spitting-boxes? It is amazing how many indispensable articles of civilized enjoyment I observe wanting, even in the first-rate houses in this country."

"I meant only to observe, that such terms as 'moral turpitude' bear a local interpretation. Arthur Armytage's offence against his mother consisted in marrying a pretty girl."

"Of disreputable character?"

"Of worse!—of obscure connexions—when *she* happened to have set her heart upon uniting him with a ladyship—the daughter of Lord Rotherham."

"The nobleman whose aristocratic oaks overshade your pinery? The owner of Greta Castle?"

"Precisely: the owner of one of those reliques of feudal grandeur and national pride, which must so greatly startle and interest you Americans, on your first glance at the Mother Country."

"Naturally enough!—as being the mansion-houses of our own ancestors, abandoned by us to the enjoyment of such of their descendants as can be content with the possession of

ancient halls and hoary forests, unenhanced by those glorious gifts of civil and religious liberty, which *we* presume to regard as the noblest portion of their inheritance."

"And, after all," demanded Mrs. Wemmersley, growing fidgetty when she observed the discussion to be assuming so personal a turn, "how will all this end about Arthur Armytage's election?"

"*That* you must consult the stars or the sybils to determine," answered her husband. "The position of Mrs. Armytage is an unprecedented one; but no doubt, with *her* lofty way of carrying things, she will contrive to make the whole county believe she has not been taken by surprise."

"I beg your pardon. What you call her lofty way of carrying things, is, after all, mere *gaucherie*."

"Mere *what*?" interrupted pertinacious uncle Lomax.

"Mere awkwardness of mind and manners.

The Duchess of Spalding declares that Mrs. Armytage has no more tact than a Muscovy duck!"

"Not to cavil at her Grace's simile, of which I confess I do not perceive the aptitude, permit me to inquire whether it may not be possible that Mrs. Armytage *despises* tact?" asked Lomax. "Tact, I take to be the accomplishment of a narrow mind — indispensable, perhaps, to a Duchess; but I do not see why the independent widow of an independent Squire should ——"

"Remember your promise, my dear Sir," interrupted Wemmersley, scarcely able to restrain his indignation when he saw a sacrilegious hand outstretched to profane one of the molten calves, the objects of his gross idolatry; — "pray, remember your promise, and do not decide on points connected with the state of English society, till at least a few weeks' experience of the stage, and acquaint-

ance with the actors, enables you to judge of the merits of the piece."

"Men and women are but men and women, I calculate, although attired in hoop petticoats, and bags and swords," observed Lomax; "but since you appear so desirous to impress upon my mind that I have hitherto dwelt among savages, and can know nothing of the practices of the civilized species—be it so! I abide the issue. As Roscommon hath it—

> 'A Satyr that comes staring from the woods
> Cannot at first speak like an orator.'"

Meanwhile, the Lady of Holywell did, indeed, find herself placed in an unprecedented situation; and one from which even the sturdy good sense with which she was endowed, scarcely sufficed to disembarrass her. She had purposed, in sending for Mr. Maudsley to become the representative of the family interest, to mark her sovereign displeasure against her son, and announce to the world an irre-

parable breach between them. That the world should judge for itself in such a juncture, and, deciding the offence of young Armytage an insufficient provocation, pronounce a separation of interests between parent and child impossible, on grounds so slight, had not entered into her calculations. Her 'people' had presumed to know her intentions better than herself, and to conclude that she could not but be secretly pleased that a son of her own should triumph at the expense of a cousin. They, good souls! would not believe her capable of turning traitress to her flesh and blood—and were of too Christianly a nature to conjecture the existence of a Brutus in petticoats, at the head of one of the prettiest rent-rolls in the Riding!

And, perhaps, they were right. Perhaps, in the midst of Mrs. Armytage's storm of indignation on finding her plans defeated, and her candidate rejected, she was for a moment secretly gratified to observe the enthusiasm

with which the people gathered to what *they* chose to consider the Holywell standard, and the warmth with which they lent their lungs and hands to acclamations of "Armytage for ever!" Aware of the character of the parties by whom Arthur's nomination had been effected, she exonerated *him* from all share in the intrigue.

But Reginald the Sapient had motives of his own for placing a different conclusion on the evidence. However irritated at having been drawn forth and shown up as a defeated man, without intention or desire on his own part, he resolved to turn his afflictions to account, by assuming the character of a martyr in the cause of Mrs. Armytage. "He *trusted* it would eventually appear that Mr. Armytage had no share in the plots and manœuvres of such a fellow as Gumption. He trusted it would be satisfactorily proved to the world that his young relative was incapable of having coalesced with a blackguard attorney, for the

purpose of enlisting a party in the county against his mother. Family piques and family dissensions he could well understand; but when family piques went the length of blazoning forth to the public every unfortunate ——" he checked himself; he was going too far; he recollected that Mrs. Armytage had been the first to call public attention to the disunion in her family. "But, perhaps," he resumed, in a tone of affected candour, "perhaps, for the sake of all parties, the less said on such a subject, the better."

But Mrs. Armytage's clear understanding was not to be confused by generalities so common-place. *She* knew that, though the least said might be best for all parties, much would be said, and much to their disadvantage. It was a dull season of the year in the country; just that heavy pause which intervenes between the cessation of holiday hospitalities, and the migration of the principal families to London; when winter pleasures are beginning

to lose their attraction, and spring gives no immediate promise of relief; when daylight daily increases, only to give to view the same leafless trees, the same brown fallows, the same sallow turf, which the obscurities of winter so advantageously tended to conceal. She knew, in short, that it was the most disagreeable month of the year, and felt that the recent events at Thoroton would be a god-send to the neighbourhood. The Duchess of Spalding, unblest with a villa near town, was unluckily in the habit of remaining in Yorkshire till after the Easter holidays, though sadly in want of country entertainment. The Wemmersleys, her grace's obedient humble servants, would take care to supply her with a thousand particulars, real or imaginary, of the Holywell disasters, to console her for the defeat of her son. The Rotherhams and Maranhams would be sincerely concerned, the whole Riding would be busy with her family mis-arrangements!

Nor did the conduct of her discountenanced *protégé* tend to palliate her annoyance. Aware that she had unintentionally ill-used him, she discerned the whole extent of his want of generosity, in his mode of holding up the ill-usage to her sympathy, of parading his bleeding wounds! A man of right feeling would have retired instantly from the field; leaving it to her conscience to reward his magnanimity. But Reginald had no magnanimity. He persisted in lingering on and on at Holywell, looking injured and sullen, in the hope that Mrs. Armytage would recompense him for having been sacrificed to her son, by sacrificing to him her daughter. He did not even choose to perceive how greatly his presence must add to her embarrassments in the event of Arthur's arrival at Thoroton.

And Arthur was daily expected; at least so said the attorney, who had been promising and vowing in his name; and, *if* really expected, dates and comparisons of dates

brought clearly to proof that he must have been a party in all the manœuvres of his political sponsor, Mr. Gumption. Sophia, in the teeth of almanacs and printed addresses, still persisted that the thing was impossible; Mr. Maudsley "hoped," "trusted," and, like Leonidas Lomax, "suspended his judgment;" while Mrs. Armytage waited in silence, but not in tranquillity. Throughout her three-and-forty years' experience of the world, never had her mind been less at ease!

CHAPTER X.

Here easy quiet, a secure retreat,
A harmless life that knows not how to cheat,
With home-bred plenty, the rich owners bless—
And rural pleasures crown their happiness.

DRYDEN.

THOUGH all the world admits that country-neighbourhoods in England are apt to bear a strong family resemblance,—that, with few exceptions, all have their grand family—their *parvenu* family—their pattern family;—their Sir Charles Grandison, or charming young man; their Harriet Byron, or sweetest creature in the world; their censorious old maid; their book-worm, or their bore;—still, each has its peculiar *cachet* and characteristics. The very soil of county and county, parish and parish, does

not vary more curiously than the nature of its human produce.

It is true, mail-coach roads, daily newspapers, and book-clubs, have done wonders to efface this individuality of organization; and the habits of the metropolis have diffused themselves over the provinces with more celerity than may be wholly desirable. The readiness of communication from one end of the empire to the other, precludes all possibility of any nook or corner remaining shut out from the progress of civilization, as we sometimes find the case among the lesser towns of France or Germany. Still there are spots more secluded than the rest—remote from a high road, remote from the manufacturing districts—where the ways are rough and the means of improvement limited; where the land, divided among a few great proprietors, gives no shelter to speculators, and small encouragement to innovation; where human nature remains unsophisticated, and character, characteristic.

And precisely one of these was the neighbourhood of Holywell. Mill Hill was its only duodecimo estate; while the town of Thoroton, situated at six miles' distance, and in a great measure the property of the family of Spalding, Greta, and Armytage, had too recently acquired political independence, to have become fully aware of the purposes of that Hydra-headed power conferred upon it by the liberality of government. Nor had the influences of fashion fallen like a mildew upon the land: distance from the capital, and other causes, conspired to perpetuate a certain old-fashioned quaintness, a sort of oaken-sturdiness of character, nearly extinct in the conventionalized country of newspapers and rail-roads. The Spaldings were at too great a distance to exercise much influence; the Rotherhams were home-staying, unambitious, matter-of-fact people; the Wemmersleys mere dots in the map; and Mrs. Armytage, (fox-hunting excepting), was little else than a

squire in petticoats, a beardless justice of the peace.

But, between Holywell and Spalding Court, precisely as if to form an unassailable out-post of the *cordon sanitaire* destined to preserve the neighbourhood from the contagion of the times, was situated a certain manor house, called The Grange; very little altered in its outward show from the period when John of Gaunt is said to have made it his favourite residence; and not in the slightest degree disturbed in its interior distribution, from the days when Lady Margaret Maranham, widow of the thirteenth Baronet of that name, retired in dudgeon from the fallen court of her gracious mistress, Queen Mary of Modena; pursued even to her dower house on the banks of the Wharfe, by jealousy of the accession of a Protestant dynasty.

Situated on the lowest level of a hollow, whose springs were collected in the moat that protected three sides of the house, thence

to find an unperceived issue towards the river, flowing at the distance of a few hundred yards, The Grange consisted of a low quadrangular edifice of freestone, ornamented by a heavy, disproportionate battlement; with an infinity of tall fanciful Gothic chimneys, apparently running to seed. Facing the main entrance, on the side where a paved court-yard supplied the place of the moat, was a carved screen of stonework, rising to nearly half the height of the principal building, which had been superadded to the Gothic Grange about the reign of First James; while closing in the court-yard, terminated at either side by a turfen terrace, stood a double row of lofty trees;—elms, beeches, sycamores—the down-drooping branches of which swept the grassy embankments of the terrace, while their elevated tops afforded shelter to a colony of woodpigeons, and spread a dense shade upon the walk extending round the court, and crossing the archway of the old stone entrance gate, which

formed a prison-like approach to the ancient mansion-house of the Maranhams.

In the moat might be discerned, from the terrace which at either extremity met and overhung its precipitous channel, a shoal of venerable grey carp, coeval with the abdicated lady-in-waiting of the abdicated queen, disturbed in their lonely haunts only by the rivalry of a pair of veteran swans of unnumbered generations, with whom they waged a sort of half-amicable war—such as the friendly neighbours of an uneventful country-parish are apt to cultivate, to while away the long summer days, and longer winter evenings. In the kennel of the adjoining offices, dwelt a species of obsolete mastiff, a breed partaking of the blood-hound, and peculiar to the place; and in the stables (the stalls of which bore, in worn-out capitals, the names of "Highflyer, "Pastorella," "Miss Prue," "Jew-boy," and "Crocus,") stood at rack and manger, other Highflyers and Pastorellas—great grandchildren of the original tenants of

the place. The oven was larger than the coach-house: beside the yawning kitchen fire-place was the turnspit's wheel;—the great hall was surrounded with a music gallery ornamented with stags' heads,—the uneven floors being tesselated with curious inlaying;—the large Elizabethan windows admitted no air and little light,—far less indeed than the carved doors, shrunken within their shattered lintels;—altogether, there was a degree of quaint antiquity about the place which would have transported to rapture even the molluscous nature of an F. R. S.

Such was the appropriate residence of three venerable spinsters, (like the Manor House, of vast antiquity, but in excellent preservation) co-heiresses of Sir Wolstan Maranham, last representative of one of the first-created English baronetages. The founder of the family was said to be a certain gallant Captain Maranham, who, in the time of King Edward VI. of catechismal memory, or thereabouts, shared

the bitter fortunes of that gallant Admiral, frozen with all his crew off the coast of Norway; and, from the surviving offspring of the weather-beaten sailor, had arisen a race, apparently smitten with the curse of commemorating, in their manners and appearance, the miserable destinies of the originator of their house. With few exceptions, the members of the Maranham family might have passed for statues of ice.

The principal of these exceptions, however, existed in the head of the house, Miss, or as she was usually termed in the neighbourhood *Mrs.* Di Maranham, who, succeeding on the decease of her father, Sir Wolstan, to the presidency of the estate, had adopted at once, as a duty and a pleasure, all the habits and practices of her predecessor. Mrs. Di was a Mrs. Armytage, cast in a coarser mould; or rather, perhaps, what Mrs. Armytage might have been, had not matronhood and maternity chanced to recall her to the softer duties of her sex.

Mrs. Di had found no affectionate Arthur to share *her* destinies; no caressing infants to inspire her with a taste for milder pleasures: her horses and dogs—nay, her kine and her oxen, were all-engrossing favourites; she looked like a groom, and talked like a grazier.

Miss Margaret, the third sister, preserved, on the contrary, all the rigid immobility characteristic of the Maranham family. A chartered invalid, shawled to the teeth, and not allowing even the zephyrs of summer to "visit her cheek too roughly," she sat ensconced during the three summer months of the English year, in a bay-window of the parlour, rivalling, as far as the thickness of its lozenge-glazed casements would permit, the temperature of a modern hot-house; and, during the nine winter months, in an oven-like chimney-nook of the same apartment. Her infirmities, real or imaginary, formed a pretext for avoiding even the limited circle of society frequented by her sisters; and either genuine indisposition, or

the singular variety of distilments and decoctions with which, under the name of simples, she choose to irrigate her fertile field of ailments, certainly imparted a most spectral appearance to features originally feminine and delicate. She was said to have been, in former days, the beauty of the family.

Miss Avarilla, the second of the weird sisters, and (although, "by'r lady, inclining to three-score,") still treated by Miss Di, as a young thing not altogether to be trusted to its own discretion—was a being as rigidly cold and formal as the coldest and most formal of the Maranham kind, yet incessantly perplexed with business—always in a sort of solemn bustle.

Horace Walpole has described the motions of the Duke of Newcastle as resembling "what one might fancy of a man hung in chains, trying to move from one place to another:"—those of Avarilla Maranham resembled what the fancy might conjecture of an auto-

maton wound up to seem in a hurry. Busying herself with the cure of all the souls and bodies in the parish, foundress of half-a-dozen institutions of the kind *called* charitable, corresponding with Dr. Jenner respecting the incubation of cuckoos and the natural history of hedgehogs—with the 'Gentleman's Magazine,' under the name of 'Philalethea,' concerning the Gothic origin of the Latin language—with Pestalozzi, touching the endoctrinization of the naughty little boys and girls on the Maranham estate—with philanthropic Owen, respecting the re-moralization of mankind — and with Professor Achtenmachtengropischkeit of Jena, touching the magnetic origin of the universe — she remained cold, undemonstrative, and inaccessible, as one of the relentless Fates; — dead to society, so called—forgetting the great world, and by the great world forgot: omitting, like Pope's 'Artemisia,'

"To pare her nails and wear a cleaner smock,"

amid the contending interests of foreign and scientific labours.

Although heartily despising Mistress Di as an unintellectualized materialist, Avarilla made it a point of conscience to treat her with the respect due to the head of the family; and, between the conscientious allegiance of the second, and the apathetic acquiescence of the third sister, Diana—chaste, but not fair—maintained undisputed sway at the Grange. Trotting along the high road to Thoroton on her favourite bay, sixteen hands high, with her straight grey hair escaping from a napless beaver, she might have been mistaken for Talleyrand in a riding-habit;—seated in her audit-room among deed-boxes, files of papers, plans, contracts, notices, circulars, and affidavits, she resembled the spectre of her old father, Sir Wolstan—

"Tricked in antique ruff and bonnet!"

And it was amid this cluster of rusty evergreens, that the fairest blossom of the country

was opening into bloom and fragrance. It was at the Grange, surrounded by the reverend Misses or Mistresses Maranham, that Rosamond Devonport was growing into the graces of womanhood; alternately chided and caressed by the three ungainly sisters; cuffed by Mistress Di for a coward; mourned over by Miss Margaret for her wilful self-exposure to sun and shower; and lectured unceasingly by Miss Avarilla for the mightiness of her ignorance, and the smallness of her powers of application. And yet they dearly loved her. All three took pleasure in her cheerfulness, and pride in her beauty; and sooth to say, it *was* as the brightness of a sunbeam, irradiating that dilapidated abode.

But Rosamond, or as she was commonly called, Rose Devonport, was not only the idol of the Grange, but the favourite of the whole neighbourhood; for she afforded a never-failing source of wonder and conjecture to the idle and the garrulous.

Who she was, or whence, still remained a mystery; although for twenty years the subject had afforded a text for scrutiny and commentation to the gossips, maid, wife, or widow, of the adjoining parishes. Somewhat before that period, Sir Wolstan Maranham, a martyr to hereditary gout, had translated himself to be killed or cured at the good city of Bath; and been translated back again two years afterwards to the crowning honours of the family vault; when the three spinsters, his daughters, took possession accordingly of his estate; and dull enough appeared the tenour of their days, until, in the course of a year or two, there suddenly and mysteriously arrived at the Grange, a nurse and child.

Miss Avarilla, the habitual spokeswoman of the family, explained to those whom it might concern, that the little girl was the orphan of a distant relative who had died in the West Indies, bequeathing it to their guardianship. But old Lord Rotherham,

father to the present Earl, who was at that time resident at Greta Castle, and of what *he* considered a facetious turn of mind, swore he was intimately acquainted with every marriage and intermarriage of the Maranhams—every twig of the family tree,—not a leaf of which was blazoned with the name or designation of Devonport; and was fond of insinuating, that the bantling bore a nearer consanguinity to Di, the least starched of the co-heiresses of his friend Sir Wolstan, than comported with her maiden fame (at forty) to avow. For a time the notion gained ground. But when it was seen that Mistress Di evinced not the slightest embarrassment under Lord Rotherham's inuendoes, that she made no secret of her affection for little Rose, nor any show of inclination to enlarge upon the child's West Indian origin, people began to give up their chimera. Rose certainly *was* a kinswoman and ward bequeathed to the care of those who had little else to care for; and

even Mrs. Armytage, their dear Mrs. Armytage, the constant object of their regard and admiration, knew no more of Miss Devonport's claims upon their tenderness, than they had chosen originally to announce.

It will scarcely, perhaps, have been implied from the foundership of the family under King Edward of blessed memory, that the Maranhams were adherents to the church of Rome. Yet so it had been, so it was, the ladies were staunch, rather than bigoted, Catholics; and a venerable man, their father's ancient chaplain and their own, resided in a comfortable house within a short distance from the Grange, to minister to their spiritual wants; and among the results of the nonconformity of the family, was the education bestowed upon Rose Devonport in the nunnery at York. Notwithstanding the tenderness of affection with which she was regarded by her guardians, it seemed impossible to Mistress Di, that her young charge could be

trained in the way she should go, otherwise than on the spot, and after the manner that she and her sisters had received their principles of instruction. From the age of ten years, therefore, to eighteen, Rose, except during her vacations, was lost to the Grange. Twice a-year she was welcomed within the old portal; and twice a-year the neighbourhood of Thoroton pronounced that she was fairer and more graceful than ever; and it was a subject of admiration to all that, while her accomplishments were beginning to rival those of Lady Laura Greta and Miss Armytage, Rose Devonport retained the archness and simplicity of a child. Not all the scolding of all her three guardians could subdue her deportment into demureness; and any one might have conjectured from the girlish liveliness alone, that her veins were wholly untempered by the ungenial currents flowing in direct descent from the frost-bitten Admiral.

It was only the winter preceding Arthur

Armytage's unlucky marriage that Rosamond, emancipated from her conventual thraldom, came to settle at the Grange; and Sophia had at present enjoyed little opportunity of exercising her kind and elder-sisterly intentions towards one who appeared at least half a century too young for the place and the people among whom her destinies were appointed. Mrs. Armytage luckily entertained a long-standing neighbourly regard for the elder dames; and from the moment that Rose took her place among them, arrayed in the graces and importance of womanhood, had said to her daughter, "Be kind to that poor girl, concerning whom the Wemmersleys have circulated such unjustifiable surmises." Rose had even once or twice been invited to pass a week at Holywell; although the Misses Maranham, two of whom were too busy, and one too idle, to quit home, would neither consent to act as her chaperons during the visit, nor suffer their precious charge to incur alone the perils

and dangers of eight days passed in such dissipated society as that of their stately friend Mrs. Armytage and her gentle-minded daughter.

Had it been otherwise, had Rose been indeed a frequent guest at Holywell, and the intimate companion of its heir-apparent, the indignation expressed by Di and Avarilla on hearing of his marriage would probably have been attributed, by the malignants at Mill Hill and elsewhere, to the disappointment of a speculation of their own, for uniting Miss Devonport with the richest proprietor of the neighbourhood. But as Rose had scarcely happened to meet with the delinquent from the time when, in childhood, they were occasionally holiday playmates, it was simply inferred by Wemmersley that the elderly spinsters desired to impress by inference, on the mind of the young lady, the madness of a love-match, and the heinousness of disobedi-

ence against the authority of those appointed by law or nature as the governors of youth.

Yet, harsh as they were, Rosamond dearly loved the three crabbed guardians of her infancy. She loved the Grange with all its quaint reminiscences. She loved to muse beneath the overshadowing trees of the old court-yard; she loved the venerable carp, swans, mastiffs, Highflyers, and Pastorellas, who, after every successive absence, seemed to welcome her home. She would follow Mrs. Di on her pony round the farm, whenever that lady's masculine vocations were such as to admit of the companionship of one of her own sex. She would indite letters and copies of letters, if not unweariedly, at least uncomplainingly, to lighten the epistolary labours of the painstaking Miss Avarilla; and, above all, she would place the easy chair, the footstool, the pillows, for the studied ease and comfort of Miss Margaret; and try to entice her out, into

the sunshine of a gay summer's morning, or bring to the dreary table of the hypochondriac all the fairest products of her flower-garden. But Margaret was too apathetic, or too selfish, to requite her attentions, even by a smile. Of the three sisters, she was evidently the one who entertained least affection for her little relative; perhaps because the vivacious movement of the happy, healthy Rosamond reminded her too mortifyingly of her own habitual infirmities, or disturbed the even current of her Lethean blood.

It was on a chilly afternoon in April that the invalid was sitting, apparently dozing, in her arm-chair, her shoulders wrapt in an Angola shawl, her feet covered with a quilt of eider-down; while Rosamond Devonport, who had done her share of duty by reading her to sleep, sat demurely working at her tapestry, just far enough from the log fire roaring in the chimney, to escape actual roasting. Mistress Di had ridden over to Thoroton to ascer-

tain the progress of the election; Avarilla was gone down to the village for the weekly examination of her spinning-school; and nothing but the hospitable practice of the Grange, which forbade all imagination of such a deed as to turn visitors from the gate on the lying plea of "Not at home," prevented the drowsy Margaret from protecting her own departure for the land of dreams, when the hobbling old serving-man entered the parlour to announce that Mr. Wemmersley and a strange gentleman were dismounting in the courtyard.

"A strange gentleman! Rose, my dear,—lay aside your work and go up stairs," mechanically responded the old maiden, rousing herself by a gentle,—a *very* gentle shake. But Wemmersley was already on the threshold, to intercept the movements of Miss Devonport; and no sooner did the half-open eyes of Miss Margaret Maranham rest upon the uncouth person of Mr. Leonidas Lomax, than she involuntarily ejaculated, "Rosamond, you may

remain." The strange gentleman was so *very* strange,—too strange to be dangerous. While Wemmersley was pouring forth his complimentary inquiries after her sisters, his congratulations on the amendment of her looks and the evident improvement of her state of health,—congratulations which he knew to be of all things most vexatious to the habitual invalid,—Rosa could scarcely take her eyes from the square-shouldered, sturdy, ungraceful Carolinian, with his frost-puckered visage, and scrutinizing glances. She did not even notice the significant looks hazarded by Wemmersley at his companion, implying—"Did you ever see such a queer old place?—did you ever meet with a more vapid old twaddle?"

"Mrs. Di rode into Thoroton, did you say?" was Wemmersley's first attempt at conversation. "I trust, then, she will extend her ride as far as Holywell, to console poor dear Mrs. Armytage!"

"Mrs. Armytage!—What has happened to

her?" inquired Miss Margaret, a slight tinge colouring her sallow cheek, and betraying the utmost warmth of sympathy she was ever known to lavish upon the disasters of her fellow-creatures.

"Sophy is well, I hope?" cried Rose, unable to maintain the rigorous silence imposed upon her by the orders of her preceptresses during the presence of visitors.

"Very well, I believe," replied Wemmersley, examining the point of his riding switch.

"And the Captain?"

"As well as can be expected, I suppose."

The sick woman coloured more deeply than before at the expression, apprehending some unpleasant double meaning.

"Has anything occurred to Arthur Armytage?" said Rosamond, unsuspiciously. "Is he returned?"

"By a majority of one hundred and thirty-four."

"A majority?"

"Of a hundred and thirty-four."

"I meant," said Miss Devonport, still perplexed, "to inquire whether Captain Armytage was come back?"

"Not exactly come *back*—he has come *forward*."

"Come forward?" demanded Margaret, with a puzzled look.

"In plain English," interrupted Leonidas, not perceiving the wit of prolonging the mutual misunderstanding of the parties, Mr. Armytage, or *Liou*-tenant, or Captain Armytage, or whatever the young gentleman calls himself, or is called by his friends——"

"I beg your pardon for interrupting you, Mr. Lomax," said Wemmersley with a grave face, "but his worst enemies never went so far as to call poor Arthur *Liou*tenant Armytage!"

"We may waive the difficulty, I calculate," replied Leonidas, sneeringly, by calling him, at once, Member of Parliament for Thoroton; for the representation of which loyal burgh

your sapient friend, my Lord Leicester Spalding, has proved a rejected candidate."

"Lord Leicester Spalding defeated? I am heartily glad of it!" murmured Miss Margaret, in her usual feeble voice, but true to the political principles of her family.

"Arthur Armytage elected? I am heartily glad of it!" cried Rose, in a far more cordial tone, but not more cordial spirit. "He must now settle in England; and Sophia's happiness will be complete!"

"Not unless she happen to find particular gratification in witnessing total estrangement between her mother and brother," snarled Mr. Wemmersley, mortified to perceive that the news he had communicated gave pain to nobody.

"Oh! but it will be impossible for Mrs. Armytage to keep up a show of resentment against her son, when she finds herself under the necessity of meeting him constantly, and seeing him well received by all the world!"

"*That* may not tend to smooth matters between them, so long as he is ill-received by herself."

"But, after all, what sin has he committed?"

"Rose — Rose Devonport!" faltered the guardian spinster, interdictingly.

"Married at three-and-twenty, without his mother's consent!" continued Rose, not hearing, or not heeding the imputed injunction.

"A very venial transgression, we may conclude," observed Leonidas sententiously, "in the eyes of a young lady of sixteen!"

"*Eighteen*, Sir, if you allude to myself," observed Rosamond, casting on her strange visiter a look of ineffable contempt.

"Rose! Rose Devonport!" again remonstrated the invalid, raising her withered hand with an air of impatience.

"You cannot surely think," cried Rosamond, turning towards her reprover with a glowing but unabashed face, "that parents have a right to prolong, over persons grown

to years of discretion, all the wilfulness, all the caprice of their authority, in matters of such dear importance as a marriage choice?"

"The authority of parents over a child *cannot* be either wilful or capricious," replied Miss Margaret, with a degree of cold serenity affording a singular contrast to the ardour of her youthful pupil. "But supposing it both, the first duty of a child is submission."

"But, my dearest granny," cried Rosamond, using, in the eagerness of her argument, a term of endearment sometimes permitted by the mild invalid during her earlier years; "you surely do not mean that you consider it the duty of Mrs. Armytage's son, after obtaining the affections of a young lady of good conduct and good family, to throw her off on finding his mother express a vague disapproval of the engagement?"

"I *do*!" said Miss Margaret. But her feeble accents were drowned in Wemmersley's scornful vociferation of "Good family!—Mag-

nificent consanguinity indeed, for one of the oldest Houses in the county of York!—Cousin to some crackbrained Irish Baronet!—her claim to gentility resting, *pour tout potage*, upon her blood relationship to some Sir Emilius O'Moran O'Tasus O'Shaughnessy, of Ballynagibberish, in the county of Limerick!"

"Rose! Rose Devonport!" again ejaculated the invalid. But as Rosamond was neither speaking nor intending to speak, nor even gesticulating the dislike she could not help entertaining for the sneering proprietor of Mill Hill, she could not exactly understand to what, in *this* instance, the disapprobation of Miss Margaret was directed.

"Did you speak? Do you want anything that I can give you?" said she, perceiving that the looks of her enfeebled companion were more wan and miserable than usual.

"No child!—no—nothing.—Go! and see whether either of my sisters be returned. I

am but a poor companion for these gentlemen. I am not equal to conversation, I—I—"

And from the increasing and deadly paleness of her cheeks, Rosamond saw that she had indeed over-exerted herself.

"Come with me into the library to wait Mrs. Maranham's arrival," cried she abruptly to her guests; "we have been talking too loud and too inadvertently, considering Miss Margaret's nervous condition."

She did not even pause, as she led the way into Avarilla's scholastic sanctum, to note the looks of pity and contempt exchanged between her brazen-hinged and iron-nerved guests.

"Thank heaven we have no nervous ladies t'other side the Atlantic!"—was the whispered adjuration of the Rationalist.

"Thank heaven we have got rid of the old lady, even at the cost of a fainting fit!"—was the friendly rejoinder of his amiable nephew. "But what the deuce could so strangely overset her?"

CHAPTER XII.

You call honourable boldness, impudent sauciness; if a man will make court'sey and say nothing, *he* is virtuous.

SHAKSPEARE.

THE contempt exhibited by the man of the Western world, for the morbid sensibilities of the ladies of the more civilized creation, would have "pretty considerably" increased, could he have surmised that, at this moment, not only the feeble Margaret Maranham, but even the lion-footed Mrs. Armytage was suffering from a disordered nervous system. Whenever a carriage was heard grating on the gravelled approach to Holywell, strange glances kindled in her eyes, in the apprehension that it must inevitably contain the new member for Thoroton. Whenever an eastern gale (and such in a Yorkshire April are of no rare occur-

rence) brought across the park uncertain snatches of certain chimes, she started, as if the church bells could no longer signalize anything more momentous than the arrival of the young M.P.

After having implied rather than expressed to her servants and acquaintances a disinclination that Arthur's name should be uttered in her hearing, she now grew pettish at their servile acquiescence; fancying that every one must be in league to withhold from her even the necessary intelligence concerning the movements of her son. She would have died rather than inquire, even of Sophia, whether any fresh intimations of Arthur's intentions had reached Thoroton; yet still she was dying to ask. Did Arthur purpose to treat her with utter contempt, with utter defiance?—Did he mean to take her by surprise, with a view of forcing her into a reconciliation?—What did he,—what could he intend?—Was he come?—Was he coming?

Alas! the coming of the successful candidate began to appear almost as problematical as the going of the defeated one; while Arthur stayed away, Reginald stayed on; assiduous to his cousin Armytage; thrice assiduous to his cousin Sophia!—On the fifth day following the election, he was about to accompany them from the breakfast-room to t hedrawing-room, and pursue, by an observation of the N.N.E. of the house, the weather-wise announcements he had been deducing from the aspect of the S.S.W., when the attention of all three was attracted by the sound of approaching wheels; and, for the fiftieth time, Sophy coloured crimson, Maudsley bit his lips, and Mrs. Armytage tried, flurriedly, to look unconcerned, in the conviction that the vehicle advancing towards the portico of Holywell contained no less a personage than him who had been so long regarded as its heir!

In this belief, not one of them chose to move

towards the window, for the verification of their hopes and fears; but each, though pretending to look elsewhere, soon discerned that the expected chaise and four was nothing better than a knowing, natty gig, containing a stranger and his servant—a sporting-looking man, with a sporting-looking servant, and a poaching-looking prick-eared dog, on the look-out between them; or it might be, two servants—or two sportsmen—or three poaching dogs—it was impossible exactly to determine in whom or what the party might consist.

"Mr. Nebwell's clerk, whom I am expecting down about the renewal of the Farringham lease," said Mrs. Armytage, greatly relieved, and resuming her usual dignity of demeanour.

"Rather, the tuner from York," observed Sophia, almost as well satisfied as her mother; "I wrote yesterday to my old friend, Mr. Blowpipe, the organist, to beg he would send one of his people to my piano."

"Piano-forte tuners and attorney's clerks!"

reiterated Mr. Maudsley with amazement. "My dear Miss Armytage, you must be blind: that was the finest horse I ever beheld in harness."

"I did not look at the horse, I was thinking of the man."

"I *did* look at the horse," said Reginald, with a grim smile, "and, therefore, form my conclusion that the *man* was a *gentleman*."

"Why not as easily a horse-dealer?" said Sophia, who made it a point to dispute her cousin's dictatorial decrees.

"Because," interrupted Mrs. Armytage, petulantly, "Mr. Maudsley is probably aware that he is——"

"Mr. Baltimore!" interrupted a footman, throwing open the door; and in bustled the active Jack, the vivacity of whose movements had left old Simmons some quarter of a mile in the rear.

"How are you, Ma'am?—Happy to make your acquaintance, Mrs. Armytage!—Thought

to have been here last night; but the people at the Blue Boar at Thoroton, where I put up, insisted that the road was not good travelling after dark. To be sure, there *is* a devil of a gravel-pit just before you turn into the lodge gates, where perhaps I might have found neat accommodation for man and horse, and if——"

"Sir?" interrupted Mr. Reginald Maudsley, advancing with solemn gesture towards the stranger, evidently with the intention of asking him the nature of his business with Mrs. Armytage, whose astonishment and disgust at the intrusion were sufficiently manifest.

"Mr. Baltimore—the father, I believe, of Mrs. Arthur Armytage?" inquired Sophia, timidly intercepting his movements, but judging it necessary to interfere before further offence was given or taken.

"Exactly!—Arthur's sister, Miss Sophy, I presume?" demanded Jack, in return. "Ay, I guessed as much, by the likeness. And Mrs. Armytage, too—devilish strong resem-

blance to my friend Arthur—might swear to the breed as safely as to a foal of Gohanna's! But I am keeping you all standing," cried Jack, checking himself, and turning with unsuspecting good humour to look for a chair; in which, having coolly seated himself, even Mrs. Armytage was not proof against the frankness of his self-possession. They all sat down, overmastered by his impudence.

"You see, Ma'am," said he, (abruptly repelling the advances of Sophia's pet spaniel, a blemish in whose genealogy the knowing eye of Jack had mechanically detected,) "you see, Ma'am, I have made my way here on a false scent: ran down to Newmarket t'other day, for the Spring meeting, with young Lord Hardup, and was persuaded by Tom Warley and Parson Longodds to push on to Croxton for the first day's running, as Tom's bay filly was——"

Mrs. Armytage no longer repressed her symptoms of impatience; and Maudsley

seemed only waiting her nod, to interfere with the sporting intelligence of her guest.

"——When, as we were journeying it through Grantham at the rate of twelve miles an hour, and turnpikes paid," resumed the reckless Jack, "what should I see placarded in black and white, as large as 'Try Turner's,' on the outside of the Leeds Regulator, but 'Armytage at the head of the poll!' Hailed coachee in a second—pulled up—and in five words made out, to my great surprise, that my son-in-law, whom I fancied to be wasting his time and money yonder among the Johnny Crapauds, was electioneering here at home, among the Johnny Bulls — standing, as the saying is, in hopes of getting a seat. Ha! ha! ha! So, says I to myself — 'Are ye there, my hearty?' and instead of keeping to time with Tom and the Parson, I turned in straight to the George, took a chop and a bed, and spanked on nor'ards at daylight, in the High-flyer as far as Doncaster, to my friend Light-

weight's, (a fellow pretty well known, I fancy, in these parts, and as good a jockey as ever crossed a horse!) and after a snack and a pint of Burton that made my ears tingle, he drove me over to Thoroton, where, as I said before, I found I had come eighty miles out of my way, on a fool's errand."

"My brother is still in France," said Sophia hastily, dreading her mother's interposition.

"Ay, so I hear from Mr. Gumption and the other gentlemen of his Committee; and more's the pity," cried Baltimore; "for, as I said to 'em this morning, what business has a young chap with *his* prospects, heir to one of the finest estates in the county, to stay gambling and masquerading among such a set of outsiders as the fellows in Paris, a pack of snobs, that run their sham matches in a sand-pit, and hunt hedgehogs with buckhounds!"

"Have you heard lately from Mrs. Arthur Armytage?" inquired Sophia, almost trembling as she spoke.

"Not these six weeks. Marian used to be a tolerable correspondent when she was gadding about with her aunt Robsey to Cheltenham and Weymouth, Margate and Broadstairs. But Paris seems to have turned her little head."

"You will not regret, then, any circumstance that tends to recall my brother to England?"

"You mean about the election? Not I! As I said this morning to the gentleman at Thoroton who acts as Arthur's factotum,—a knowing sort of blade, that, and seems to have served my son-in-law *con a mory*, as they say in France,—if Arthur Armytage, of Holywell Park, hasn't a right to be in parliament, who has, I should like to know? And, as Gumption observed in answer, the notion of pitting a mettled lad like *him* against such a cream-faced tailor as young Spalding—(whom they blackballed last year at the Cocoa Tree,) or such a spoony as——"

"We ought perhaps to have introduced you

to my cousin, Mr. Reginald Maudsley," stammered Miss Armytage, hazarding anything rather than the personal commentary which was half escaping the lips of Jack Baltimore; and Jack, with an involuntary "Whew!" half arose from his seat, to duck a courteous bow to the defeated candidate, which the defeated candidate returned with a frozen salutation, such as might have done honour to the statue of the *Commendatore* in Don Juan.

But Mrs. Armytage's disgust by this time exceeded all control; and, rising from her seat with an air of dignified impatience, she observed to her daughter—"If this gentleman have anything to acquaint me with, which it is necessary for me to know, you will find me in the library. I have business with Hardywood. Mr. Maudsley, do me the favour, I beg, to remain here with your cousin." And, scarcely curtseying, she withdrew all her majesty from the room.

"Well—upon my honour!" ejaculated Jack,

as the door closed after her, "Royalty is a joke to Mrs. Armytage!"

"You will have the goodness to remember, Sir, that you are in the presence of her daughter," said Maudsley.

"I always heard she was as proud as Lucifer," continued Jack, in an angry voice, without noticing his interruption, "but this beats cock-fighting! What the devil does she take me for?"

"Dear Mr. Baltimore!" cried Sophia, clasping her hands, while the tears stood in her eyes with terror, lest the elevated tone in which he spoke should reach her mother's ears; "if you have the least regard for Arthur, let me entreat you to say and do nothing that may widen the breach between him and my mother. You are already aware that, without intending the slightest disrespect to your family, she greatly disapproved of his marrying so early in life."

"And why the deuce should she?" interrupted Jack. "What had Mrs. Armytage

ever done for Arthur to give her any right to interfere with his actions?"

"She was his *mother*," mildly remonstrated Sophia.

"And a pretty mother to boast of!—I can tell Mrs. Armytage, most people in the county are of opinion that she ought to have given up the Holywell estate to him on his coming of age. Why, the gentlemen of the committee at Thoroton were saying so only this morning; and if *I* were in Arthur's shoes, I would take care to overhaul old Maudsley's will pretty sharply, and make sure that——"

"If you continue in this strain, I fear I must put an end to our interview, which would give me very great pain," said Miss Armytage, mildly; "for, believe me, I have it deeply at heart that Arthur and his wife should be on comfortable terms with my mother, and live among us as they ought. Mamma has been accustomed to great respect from her children,

great deference from those around her; and should any unfortunate contrariety occur just now to incense her against my brother, the consequences might be fatal to his interests. I am sure you are too good-natured, too kind-hearted, to wish to inflame our family dissensions. Let us, on the contrary, all unite and do our best to bring things smooth again. I am expecting Arthur every day, every hour. Do not, pray do not, aggravate any unkind feelings he may harbour against my mother, by relating to him the unfortunate circumstances that have occurred this morning!"

"Miss Armytage, you really humiliate yourself by these concessions," said Reginald, coming forward from the window, at which he had stationed himself, as if resolved not to sit down again in Mr. Baltimore's company. "It is an injustice to your family to——"

"Who asked for *your* opinion, Sir?" cried Jack, fiercely, and with a kindling eye.

"Sir, I am here by Mrs. Armytage's desire, for the protection of her daughter," replied Maudsley, with ineffable disdain.

"The protection of her daughter, indeed! What do you suppose her daughter has to fear? Do you fancy that a sweet gentle creature like Miss Armytage could provoke a man to forget his manners, like yonder old termagant? No, no! Mr. Cousin! your assistance is not wanted; and unless I'm much at fault, you may chance to find yourself kicked out with the young lady as well as with the old borough; at the tag end of the poll, here, there, and everywhere! You understand me?"

"Sir!" cried Reginald, in a voice that seemed to make the breakfast-china, still remaining on the table, chime and jingle—"give me leave to say——"

"I shall give you leave to do no such thing! You have heard my opinion. Make the most

of it, or make me answer for it. 'Rough and Ready!' is Jack Baltimore's motto; and——"

Sophia's tears now literally began to flow; and Jack was pacified in a moment.

"Come, come, my dear young lady," cried he, "I did not mean to say anything to annoy you; God forbid! If my bark has proved worse than my bite, you must pardon a straight-forward, plain-sailing fellow, whose pride is not a little touched by the way his girl and her family have been treated. Give me your hand, Miss Sophia, and I hope we may live to become better friends. I see I must wait for Arthur's return to learn all I want to learn, and know all I want to know; but take this from *me*, meantime, and for as true a truth as that God is above us,—that I had rather ten million times have my child at home again among her brothers and sisters, happy and merry, and roughing it with the rest, than see her matched with the greatest lord in the

land, to be looked down upon, she and her relations, as I see she is like to be, here at Holywell Park."

"No, no, no," cried Sophia. "All will eventually go right; and I shall live to see my brother as happy as he deserves."

Mr. Baltimore shook his head. He was already on his legs; and now began to retreat towards the door.

"You are going," added Sophia, "and I have not yet thought of offering you refreshments!"

"Refreshments?" reiterated Jack, with a significant smile. "Thankee, thankee! Mrs. Armytage's civilities have refreshed me enough for this week to come. I wish you good morning; ay, ay! shake hands, and welcome. I wish you a very good morning; and as to *you*, Sir, I wish *you* better manners, and my service to you."

And away shuffled Jack, waiting for no announcement to the servants, no summons

to Lightweight, no bringing round of gigs; straight to the offices; muttering curses between his teeth, and totally indifferent even to the magnificent range of stabling; even to the incomparable dog-yard and kennelling; even to the capital preserves and stretching woodlands that met his eyes, forming part of the future domains of his dear little ill-used Marian. He had no patience to admire anything belonging to Mrs. Armytage!

CHAPTER XIII.

She, of late, is froward,
Reserved and sad, and vexed at little things;
Which her great soul, ashamed of, strait shakes off,
And is composed again.

DRYDEN.

DURING that day, although Mrs. Armytage maintained the strictest silence touching the extraordinary visitation with which she had been favoured, it was plain that her indignation was overpowering. And yet, at times, Sophia could not help fancying that her mother seemed pleased; pleased, perhaps, to find her vague prejudices against the odious family of Baltimore so fully justified.

But if Tuesday had been unpropitious to the cause of the ill-starred Arthur, Wednesday did wonders in his favour. Wednesday brought the foreign post, and the foreign post a letter

for his mother; which it would be unjust to his first efforts in parliamentary correspondence, to transfer to the dry periods of narrative. Let the new M.P. speak,—as new M.P.s should,—for himself.

"*Rue de Rivoli, April 2nd.*

"Dear Mother,

"I have hitherto refrained from writing to you, solely in deference to what I concluded must be your wishes on the subject. If, therefore, I do wrong in now addressing you, attribute it to my sincere desire of profiting by your judgment, and fulfilling your wishes. You must not suppose that, because I consulted only my own inclinations in an affair so nearly concerning my happiness as marriage, I am indifferent to yours on that or any other subject. But, without wearying you with professions, allow me to come at once to a point of business.

"I have this day received a hurried letter

from a person of the name of Gumption, (whom I think I recollect as a scamp of an attorney, at Thoroton,) stating that, in consequence of old Arable's being raised to the peerage, and a vacancy unexpectedly occurring in the representation of the borough, he had brought me forward and secured my election, 'in his great zeal for my interests, and those of the country;' in short, that he had done his officious best to thrust me into Parliament, whether I would or no.

"This business has taken me altogether by surprise. Conscious that I have deeply offended you, I foresee that I can scarcely stir in it without offending you further. I am aware that you formerly entertained a project of bringing me forward in political life as the representative of our family interest; but it seems probable that your views on this point may have changed with circumstances. My own fortune does not place me in a situation to accept the honours so unsatisfactorily be-

stowed; nor am I desirous that they should be the means of marking to the world the differences existing between us.

"Now, I appeal to your candour, my dear mother, to acquit me of all intention of manœuvring myself into a happier situation; and if it be your desire that I should decline the seat offered, I will seize the pretext of health, or some other equally valid, to excuse myself, to my self-constituted constituency. Your silence will suffice to confirm me in this intention; but if, on the contrary, I receive a word of encouragement from your hand, I own it will infinitely gratify me to return to England with the hope of restoring myself to your confidence and affection. Act, however, in your decision, as if this desire had not been expressed; and whatever your sentence may prove, believe in the unaltered respect of your affectionate son,

"Arthur Maudsley Armytage."

This frank and unanticipated appeal went straight to the heart of Mrs. Armytage. Reserved people are peculiarly susceptible to the influence of frankness; and, reserved or not, there was a vein of generosity in the imperious woman's nature, that glowed with sympathy towards the fine, free, forgiving temper of her son. Within the last few days, Reginald Maudsley's cool, ungenial inaccessibility had put her somewhat out of conceit with the pendencies and expediencies of life; and now that Arthur had proved himself guiltless of all confederacy with her enemies, she was almost ready to pardon him for having been elected in opposition to the candidate of her choice.

"Sophia," said she, addressing her daughter, who sat anxiously watching the expression produced upon her countenance by the perusal of the letter; while Maudsley, who was seated opposite, and equally scrutinizing, affected to give his whole attention to the decipherment

of the 'Times'—"I know you are eager to learn the result of your brother's explanations. You will rejoice to find that he has completely vindicated himself of coalition with the plots of Mr. Gumption."

"I rejoice to find that you admit his exculpation, dear mamma," said Sophia, colouring; "for myself, believe me, I never for a moment doubted my brother's innocence."

"*I* did; and am sorry for it; nay, more, *ashamed* of it;" continued Mrs. Armytage; and the word "ashamed" sounded strangely when pronounced by lips so stern as hers.

"It must assuredly afford you considerable consolation under the very awkward circumstances in which you have been placed by the unhappy marriage contracted by my cousin," observed the sententious Reginald, "to find that he has disavowed all intention of entering into public opposition to your views and feelings; for, as his father-in-law, Mr. Baltimore, was observing, yesterday morning——"

"We will not talk of Mr. Baltimore now," —hastily interrupted Sophia. "Tell me, dear mother, what are Arthur's intentions about the election?"

"To submit to mine."

"And *may* I ask, what have you decided? Is he likely to return to England?"

"Immediately."

"To take his seat in the House of Commons?" demanded Maudsley, sneeringly.

"To establish himself in *mine*," replied Mrs. Armytage, provoked into saying more than she intended, by the cold-blooded and ill-timed irony of her kinsman.

"My dear, dear mamma!" cried Sophia, seizing and kissing her mother's hand. "You will write to-day and tell him so, will you not?"

"*You* are his habitual correspondent," said Mrs. Armytage, hesitatingly; "and it will save a world of disagreeable explanations, if you undertake the task of expressing my desire

that he should return home without loss of time."

The word "home," thus applied to Arthur, produced a delightful effect on the ears of Sophia: but she resisted.

"No,—mother!—you must write to him *yourself*. Think what it will be for my brother to receive a letter from your own hand, after so many months' silence. *Pray* write to him yourself!"

"If *I* can be of the least use, my dear Madam, as your amanuensis,"—Reginald began.

"Not in the slightest, I thank you," replied Mrs. Armytage, gradually recovering her self-possession. "Sophia is right; it *is* my business to write to my son; I will despatch my letter instantly.—Sophy, my love, while I am in the library, order the carriage to drive over to Greta Castle. I shall request my friend Lord Rotheram to oblige me by announcing at Thoroton, that Mr. Armytage may be immediately expected."

"No doubt he has already communicated his intention to Gumption," said Reginald, curious to discover exactly by what terms of submission Arthur had operated so sudden a revolution in the feelings of his mother.

"I rather think *not!*" said Mrs. Armytage, drily.

"Poor Mr. Baltimore! If he have not yet quitted the Blue Boar, how will he be charmed to learn this change in the prospects of his son-in-law!" persisted the disappointed man.

"Not more than all our friends and neighbours, to find Arthur once more restored to my mother's affections!" cried Sophia; "the Gretas, the Maranhams, the Wemmersleys, all have taken the estrangement so much to heart."

Mrs. Armytage stopped short as she was leaving the room. Sophia had not benefited her brother's cause as she intended by this last observation. Mrs. Armytage scarcely liked to hear that the position of her son excited so

strong an interest among her friends and neighbours.—No doubt many of them had silently adjudged her to be in the wrong!

"Half the mischief that occurs in families," she petulantly observed, "is occasioned by the undue interference of strangers; by the idle habit prevailing in the world of commenting on the business of others, of which we know nothing, and of which, *did* we know anything, delicacy should interdict the discussion."

It was fortunate, perhaps, for Miss Armytage that Maudsley had attempted to make so much of his advantages with his high-minded cousin;—had he left his injuries to be redressed by a *voluntary* effort of her generosity, Mrs. Armytage would probably have confirmed her early intentions in his favour. It had, in truth, been long her dearest desire to make him her son-in-law; but she would not be dictated to, even for the furtherance of projects of her own;—and when, that evening, the mortified Reginald demanded an audience of

her, insisted largely upon the injury already experienced by the Maudsley family at her hands, in her preference of a stranger to his father, and her infructuous election overtures to himself, and seemed to make the hand of Sophia a meed due to the reparation of his wrongs, rather than a generous concession, Mrs. Armytage's pride enlisted itself against his pretensions. She assured him she should leave the decision entirely to the discretion of her daughter.

Nothing less than some very strong excitement would have wrung such a declaration from her lips! so little, indeed, was she in the habit of vesting any right of option in her children, and so strong was the influence of the ruling passion in her breast, that in her conference on the subject with Sophia, these generous intentions appeared to be already obliterated from her mind.

"I have undertaken," said she, ceremoniously, "to lay before you the pretensions

of your cousin Reginald to your hand. As the eldest son of my nearest relative, Sir John Maudsley, no less than on account of the honourable character he has already attained in society, he has every claim to your consideration: when I add that his suit has obtained my fullest sanction, I trust I have said all that is necessary to say on the subject. I have been unfortunate in my recent attempts to promote the interests of my young relative; I trust my aid may be more available in securing his happiness."

"Not by a marriage with your daughter, my dear mother!" cried Sophia. "Believe me, no measure would be more injudicious for all parties. Of all the men I have ever seen, Reginald Maudsley is the one I could least like,—least love,—least honour as a husband."

"*My* opinion, it seems, possesses considerable value in your eyes!" ejaculated Mrs. Armytage. "Far be it from me to exercise *authority* over you on such a point; but I did

hope my judgment might in some degree operate in the regulation of your own."

"Judgment—ah! mother; it is too late to talk of judgment!" replied Sophia.

"Do you mean me to understand, then," hastily interrupted Mrs. Armytage, "that pre-engagement renders impossible the alliance which, for many years past, I have derived so much satisfaction from contemplating?"

"Not an *engagement*. You cannot for a moment suppose I could have taken a step of so much importance without reference to your advice."

Mrs. Armytage's wrath was somewhat appeased by this declaration; but she resolved to make the utmost use of Sophia's mood of submission. "I am to understand, then," said she, "that your objection to this match is personally and exclusively to Mr. Maudsley."

"Personally and exclusively."

"And that, on any similar occasion, I may esteem myself secure of holding a mother's

right of influence over your decision?—that you will not, in short, engage yourself without my approbation?"

"Certainly, certainly! I will do more. I promise you, my dear mother, that no inclination, no preference of my own, shall induce me to marry without your consent. All you have done, all you are still doing for me, all the authority which you derive over my conduct from the laws of nature and of God, demand such a pledge. Do not insist upon my marrying my cousin Maudsley, or any other man objectionable to my feelings, and I leave all the rest in your hands. To your *wishes* I submit the absolute control of my prospects in life."

Mrs. Armytage, no less surprised than delighted, imprinted a kiss on the forehead of her submissive child, ere she proceeded to acquaint Mr. Maudsley with the decision of Sophia. But, even prepared as she now was for the unamiable stiff-neckedness of his ego-

tism, she had not anticipated the insolent reproaches with which her communication was received by her *protégé*, the haughtiness of whose temper was only too unsatisfactorily congenial with her own. She felt herself irretrievably offended; and when the carriage of the indignant Reginald drove forth from the court-yard, his kinswoman hardened her heart with the most indignant resentment against even his contingent claims of succession to the family inheritance. She was more enraged against her graceless favourite than she had ever been against her son.

But while Sophia, elate with the prospect of Arthur's restoration to favour, watched exultingly from the window the final exit of the disappointed Maudsley, the rival at home of her lover and her brother, she did not sufficiently reflect upon the infinite importance of the prerogative with which she had invested Mrs. Armytage. In the triumph of sisterly affection, she forgot that henceforth the control

of her hopes and happiness was delegated to another; that she was no longer, even nominally, the arbitress of her own career! Alas! the first dark page of her destinies was already unfolding!

CHAPTER XIV.

——— a learned and a manly soul
I purposed her, that should with even powers
The rock, the spindle, and the shears control
Of destiny, and spin her own free hours.

BEN JONSON.

THE days passed on; and at length, "'twixt sun and shower," arrived the morning which was to welcome back Arthur Armytage to the home of his infancy; or rather, as Mrs. Armytage considered the question, to the residence of his maternal ancestors. Sophia, when she opened her eyes full an hour earlier than usual, rejoiced to perceive that the skies shone auspiciously on the event; and it struck her, when she looked forth from her window upon the noble park-scenery of Holywell, its turf sprinkled over by the first spring daisies, and

its plantations vivified by their earliest tinge of green, that the place had never looked so majestic or so gay before. The waters of the Wharfe were rippling in the sun; the rooks circling hither and thither over the avenues, noisy and busy as the members of a new parliament; the gardeners had attempted their first mowing of the lawns which intersected (as at wood-encircled Dropmore) the groves, skirting one wing of the mansion; all was alive—all cheerful—and Sophia's heart was light within her bosom, as with the lightness of a bird.

She was provoked, however, as the business of the day proceeded, to notice that "the sense of the house" was at variance with her own. The domestics of Holywell, like other ancient corporations, were apt to wax obstinate in their opinions; and the steward's-room having originally settled that Master Arthur was in the wrong, chose to abide by the decree; their mistress might see fit to change her

verdict, they were less versatile; the visit of Jack Baltimore in his "one-horse chay," had stereotyped their protest against their young master's matrimonial alliance. Old Hardywood, accordingly, with whom his lady's will was absolute, was the only one of the household who chose to make the return of the offender an epoch of rejoicing. He invested himself in his yellow-white Marcella waistcoat, girded on his brown-black satin shorts, smoothed down his long white hair, and disposed his feelings for a holiday. But Simmons was sulky; the lame, deaf, and blind ladies of the bed-chamber and still-room put on afflicted faces, inverted the corners of their mouths, and shook their heads whenever Mrs. Armytage came in sight. They would not understand anything; and for all particulars of preparation connected with the expected guests, chose to demand a thousand unnecessary instructions.

Smooth as was the course of hospitality at

Holywell on all other occasions, and arbitrary as old Mrs. Caudlecup's distribution of its chambers and bills of fare, she chose to be told not only what rooms were to be appropriated to Master Arthur and his lady, but where Mrs. Arthur's maid was to sleep, and where the valet. She even took occasion to inquire whether the blue drawing-room was to be got ready as a morning-room for Mrs. Arthur, in case it should not be agreeable to her to breakfast with the family; and was as much puzzled what roast to provide for the second course, "now that game was out, and chickens and ducklings not yet fit for the spit," as if she had not been in the habit of meeting similar exigencies, every spring for her last fifty years of service.

The head coachman, too, chose to understand that he had been ordered to take the set of bays to a post-town at fourteen miles distance, instead of a neighbouring village, enabling Arthur to make his entry into Tho-

roton with suitable honours. The off-leader was accordingly announced to be in physic, and Jem Outrider to be dead lame—or the leader to be lame, and the groom in physic—no matter!—it was some stable catastrophe, intending to prove to Mrs. Armytage the extreme inconvenience entailed upon her establishment by Master Arthur's arrival. For a moment Sophia entertained a project of repairing to the offices and haranguing the factious members thus inopportunely striving to rekindle the embers of discord. But her usual prudent avoidance of all interference with her mother's absolute sway, warned her that she might do more harm than good to the cause; and repeating to herself the oft-repeated axiom, that "Time and tide wear through the roughest day," she retreated shortly after breakfast to her own room, trusting that her mother's attention was engrossed by her usual avocations.

But this was not likely. The event of the

day was a great event to Mrs. Armytage; her conscience and her pride were equally uneasy. She felt that for years past she had acted somewhat harshly towards her only son: that she had excluded him from her confidence, and jealously repelled his participation in the administration of the family affairs. She would have given much for courage to deal more frankly, more generously, with him: but conscious of her own weakness (a king-like susceptibility to the encroachments of her successor), she dreaded to lay aside a sceptre which she knew her feelings would the next moment prompt her to re-assume! Still, Mrs. Armytage hankered after a better frame of mind; still she tried to fan her flickering virtue into a flame. In traversing the picture-gallery at the housekeeper's desire, to inspect the suite of rooms prepared for the young couple, she paused opposite the portrait of her husband—the husband of her youth—the husband of her choice—the father of her children

—*of Arthur* — the confiding, open-hearted, open-handed, reverential husband, who had so readily surrendered all right and authority to the hands of the woman he honoured with his love. It was a spirited picture from the pencil of Gainsborough; full of animation—full of life and health—and full, too, of the peculiarly bland but joyous expression of countenance distinguishing her son. It recalled the days of her girlhood, of her first affections, her first consciousness of perfect happiness: the plighting of her virgin vows, the birth of her first-born child.

Few widows, after so vast a lapse of years, could have gazed with so unaccusing a conscience on the resemblance of their husband. From the day of his untimely death, Mrs. Armytage had, in truth, suffered no living man to produce even a momentary impression on her feelings. But she was not equally satisfied of her blamelessness in the discharge of the great duty he had committed to her hand.

Perhaps she *ought* to have done more for Arthur, and overcome her feelings of resentment against his opposition to her views: but it was not yet too late. Tears rose in her eyes, as, still gazing upon her husband's picture, she felt rejoiced that it was not. She congratulated herself that her son was on his way home—that he would arrive that very day, and went her way to inspect the blazing fires in the chintz bed-room and its spacious dressing-rooms, with a lighter step, and brow less haughty than was the wont of Mrs. Armytage.

Meanwhile, Sophia's reflections, if of a different, were scarcely of a less moving cast. Deep was her reverence for her mother; dear and devoted her sisterly tenderness for Arthur; and the anticipation of their immediate reunion, and the restoration of family peace at Holywell, filled her mind with holy and grateful delight. All, henceforth, would be well with those whom her soul loved!

Like her mother, too, her thoughts were

straying back into the past—to nursery reminiscences—to holiday recollections—to the girlish and boyish projects of herself and Arthur. It had been so often settled between them what wife he was to bring home to Holywell, and how she was to be welcomed; but the *beau ideal* sister-in-law did not, it must be admitted, resemble a Marian Baltimore. A gentle tap at the door at length disturbed her meditations, and Sophia started from her seat at the entrance of her friend Lady Laura Greta.

"Do not let me disturb you," said she, stealing in on tiptoe, and placing herself without ceremony in the seat nearest to Sophia's musing chair: "I dare say you wish me away. I believe I ought not to have come; yet, indeed, dearest Sophy, I could not bear to stay away, knowing how anxious you must be this morning. At what hour do you expect these people?"

"Every minute; we hardly know. A few

hurried lines written by Arthur on landing at Dover, contain all we have learned of their intentions."

"He ought to have written again, knowing, as he does, the tenacity of Mrs. Armytage on all matters of family ceremony. Besides, the Thorotonians are kept in such sad suspense! I have a suspicion they have been in waiting since daylight to be in readiness to draw the new member into town."

"Poor Arthur cannot, of course, be apprized of that."

"No! but from many trifles I have noticed since his marriage (with respect to yourself in particular), I am convinced we shall find him less considerate than he used to be of the feelings of others."

"No—no—I cannot listen to such a prediction!"

"Ah! Sophy! you may rationalize as much as you will, and preach Christian humility or philosophical equality till you are tired; but

trust me, there is nothing so demoralizing in human nature as the influence of inferior society."

"*That* is one of Lord Greta's notions."

"His or mine, no matter—accept it for a truism."

"First tell me what you mean by inferior society?"

"People without refinement—without enlightenment."

"Refinement is so arbitrary a quality, so wholly dependent on individual views and station."

"In one word, then, I mean low people, such as the Baltimores."

"I thought so; and you judge them prematurely. What do we know at present of the family? Dearest Laura! allow me to hope for the best!"

"Well, well—I dare say I am wrong; at all events wrong to come and plague you about them this morning, when I know you are feeling so uneasily."

"I am, indeed. The events of to-day will probably enable me to form an opinion of Arthur's prospects of happiness in life; and, *if* that opinion should be unfavourable!—such a dear good brother as he is!"

"It is now my turn to say, make the best of it. But you look so worried, dear Sophy, that I hardly like to communicate the nature of my business at Holywell."

"Business at Holywell! Have you any, besides the task of saying a cheering word to raise my spirits?"

"I am come as an ambassadress for my mother. Mamma, in the warmth of her love for me, knowing how infinitely I dislike what is called 'going out' in town, wants to reconcile me to my fate by persuading you to accompany us to London for the season. She promises to take the greatest possible care of you, and so forth; not to torment you to become more dissipated than suits your health and convenience; and to bring you back safe to

Holywell whenever you may choose. You can take your own servants or not, as you will; only papa and mamma are anxious that you should consider yourself completely one of the family.

"How very kind of Lady Rotherham!"—

"Very kind towards her daughter. Oh! my dear Sophy!—*do* say yes! I have set my heart upon your going with us to London."

Sophia coloured to the temples; but said nothing.

For two years past particular motives had inspired her with the most ardent desire to visit London: and she knew there was no chance of persuading her mother to quit Holywell. But she was prudent enough to deliberate.

"I came to consult your own wishes before mamma made her petition in form to Mrs. Armytage," continued Lady Laura, "fearing she might be inclined to urge you to compli-

ance against your inclinations; or to refuse her consent, in case you are inclined to gratify our hopes. So you have only to tell me sincerely your desire, and nothing shall be left unattempted to bring it to pass."

"A thousand thanks!—Pray, then, beg Lady Rotherham, in my name, on no account to mention her kind invitation to my mother—I think she *would* wish my acceptance of so kind and friendly a proposal: but much as I should like the visit I must not just now quit Holywell. I may be wanted as an adviser—as a peace-maker;—I may—"

"That odious Mrs. Arthur Armytage again!"

"Hush!—hush!"

"And you are really going to make yourself a martyr, and sacrifice your prospects and inclinations to a stranger?".

"Not to a stranger; but Arthur's temper is hastier than mine; and many little disturb-

ances may occur at Holywell needing all my influence to pacify. I should be miserable to be away from home just now."

"But mamma will put off her departure for London for a week or ten days, to enable you to smooth away the difficulties of your brother's first arrival."

"Dear Laura! Can you indeed suppose that a week will enable persons of such different ways of living and thinking as my mother and her daughter-in-law, to understand each other, and—"

"And what can *you* do to improve their temper or understanding?"

"Something, at least, to tranquillize Arthur's susceptibility; 'A soft answer,' you know, 'turneth away wrath;' and how could *I* answer him otherwise than softly—I love him so dearly! Hark! I think I hear the sound of wheels—yes!—they are certainly coming."

"Do not agitate yourself,—sit down; drink

this glass of water!" cried Lady Laura, herself turning alternately pale and red, as a carriage decidedly entered the sweep.

But while Sophia, scarcely able to stand, was summoning courage to go down and welcome the new-comers, Lady Laura Greta exclaimed in a voice half-vexed, half-triumphant—"What a waste of our sensibility!—It is only those odious Wemmersleys and their Yankee cousin, come to offer their congratulations, no doubt, to Mrs. Armytage! Let us leave them to the full enjoyment of their malice. Unless we are summoned to the drawing-room, Sophy, remain here, and conclude our negotiations. I cannot return home in peace till you have assented to mamma's proposal. You must, you really *must* accompany us to London."

CHAPTER XV.

Sweet Willie, the flower of Liddesdale,
Had taken him o'er the saut sea faem,
And now he's come fra' foreign land,
And has woo'd a wife and brought her hame.

And lovely sweet fair Alice was,
And bonnie yellow was her hair;
And happy, happy, might she ha' been,
But his mother wrought her mickle care.

OLD BALLAD.

WHILE their attention was absorbed by the interesting subject of their conference, the visit of the Wemmersleys wore to an end; and even Lady Laura was at length obliged to ring and order her pony-carriage without further tidings of Arthur's arrival.

Sophia grew anxious and fidgety. The sun was streaming down the western avenue, as Lady Laura took her departure. The river and the woods had already assumed their

sombre evening hue. The first dinner-bell rang; the rooks were already at roost; the "sheep were in the fauld, and the rye at hame," but still no Arthur.

Sophia began to tremble. Twice had her mother referred to her son's last epistle; and its hieroglyphics, although in other respects most Etonianly and Parliamentarily illegible, bore a distinct promise, that "On Thursday next, without fail, we shall be at Holywell." The engagement was positive; but its rupture appeared only too probable. Still, the influence of the picture, and of the compunctious visitings to which it had given rise, were all ascendant; and when the turret clock of the offices chimed half-past seven, and old Simmons hobbled in for the fifth time to inquire whether dinner might be served, Mrs. Armyage answered in the affirmative, without any harsher commentary than an order that certain dishes might be kept hot for the travellers.

Sophia now began to dread that, after all his procrastinations, Arthur would make his appearance in the middle of dinner, a meal of some ceremony at Holywell;—and who does not know the awkwardness of such an interruption?—the dining party swallowing their hasty mouthfuls, laying aside their napkins, and hurriedly shaking off the evidence of their occupation — the arriving-party introduced into a room savouring of anchovy sauce, sherry, and divers ragouts, yet protesting, that amid this compound of villainous smells, there is not the slightest effluvium of dinner! There was no cause, however, for alarm: the turbot boiled into wool—the lamb calcined into dust —the cutlets browned to the tint of umber—the much-injured teal—the asparagus beheaded of its verdant tops—were successively removed. Dessert was put on table; and a pine-apple of dimensions to win a horticultural prize, and especially destined by the head-gardener to do honour to the visit of Master

Arthur, instead of adding weight to his own pocket by following its fellows clandestinely to Covent Garden, was remorselessly or unwittingly cut by Mrs. Armytage, although she would not, and Sophia *could* not, taste it!

Then came coffee, and after coffee, tea; and after tea, (dinner having been so unusually late,) came Simmons—officious Simmons! with the bed candles. Yet why officious? Eleven of the clock had struck, and half-past ten was Mrs. Armytage's usual hour for retiring.

"I should think—I should *trust*," said she to her daughter, as she wished her good night, "that they will not come now. However," she continued, turning to Simmons, and the footman waiting to extinguish the lights, "place a supper-tray in the dining-room, and let some one sit up. John, go down to the South Lodge, and tell Martindale it is my desire he should be on the watch till daylight."

It was evident that she had not forgotten her son's last outrageous inbreak upon the sober

habits of Holywell; and Sophy had the mortification to perceive, while watching from her dressing-room window, which overlooked those of her mother, that Mrs. Armytage had retired —but not to rest; till one—till two—till three in the morning, the shutters of one window remained unclosed, from which the crimson curtain was, from time to time, cautiously drawn aside. It was evident that Arthur's arrival was still anxiously expected. Towards morning, however, even the excited Sophia became over-wearied, and throwing herself on her bed, slept to dream of Arthur and his misdoings.

It needs to have been spell-bound in the enthralling chain of ceremony existing in certain formal English country-houses of the old school, to be aware of the importance assigned to a visit procrastinated, or a letter unanswered. In those uneventful Castles of Indolence, where all the excitement is from without, even while the influence of public events is scarcely perceptible, the delaying guest be-

comes a malefactor, and the negligent correspondent a suspicious character. Berlin might have been sacked and burnt, or China depopulated by the plague, and the event would have produced far less sensation at Holywell than the non-arrival of Master Arthur!

On the morrow, too, a transgression on the part of Miss Armytage increased the indignation of the steward's room. Almost for the first time in her life, Sophy was not ready for breakfast, and her mother sat down alone! But the delinquent made her appearance in time to detect the mortified expression of her mother's countenance, when the daily papers were laid on the table, unaccompanied by the expected letter of apology from her son.

An hour or two afterwards, however, old Hardywood, having exchanged his holiday black satins for quotidian kerseymere, claimed an audience of his lady, to acquaint her that the rider of one of the Thoroton tradesmen had just circulated intelligence in the servants'

hall, that, as he quitted the town, Captain Armytage was entering the High Street in a chaise and four — the no longer expectant populace having been unprepared to draw him to the Town Hall!

"They will be here, then, immediately," cried Mrs. Armytage, slightly colouring.

"I rather think not, Madam," mumbled her ancient servitor, "for Lawyer Gumption was with Master Arthur, and I fancy there will be a deal of work for them to do at the Town Hall, before they can push on to Holywell."

"What will become of Mrs. Arthur, meanwhile?" involuntarily ejaculated Mrs. Armytage.

And Sophia, who was at her mother's elbow, as involuntarily replied, "If I were to take the carriage, and go to Thoroton—and—and bring her here at once?"

Sophia was wrong. She should have left so conciliatory a measure to be proposed by

Mrs. Armytage. Anything resembling dictation was fatal.

"I see no occasion for putting ourselves out of the way for those who put themselves so little out of the way for *us*," was her cold reply. "No doubt they will find their way here at their own time and pleasure."

And, in the course of a few minutes, that time and pleasure became fully demonstrated. A French calêche, drawn by jaded posters, looking jaded as only posters *can* look, and smoking as only posters *can* smoke, drew up under the portico—having a courier, half French, half German, half Italian, and a *soubrette*, wholly, entirely, and manifestly Parisian, for its outside passengers—within, a pretty Frenchified little doll of a woman, and an ugly Frenchified little dog of a poodle. Sophy trembled! She would have trembled still more had she been aware that Arthur's rash charge to his wife throughout their hurried

journey from Dover, had been—"Above all things, beware of allowing my mother to perceive that you are afraid of her: unless you appear perfectly free and at ease in her presence, she will fancy that we are secretly resenting the past. For my sake, pray exert your spirits to the utmost."

Fortunately enough, the courier, the femme de chambre, and the poodle, escaped for a time the scrutinizing eyes of Mrs. Armytage, who stood awaiting, at the door of the library, her long-expected daughter-in-law and guest."

"I trust you met with no accident? We expected you yesterday," said she, bestowing a solemn salutation on the cheek of the stranger; when Marian, true to her recently acquired Parisian habits, familiarly offered the other *à la Française*, for a reciprocation of the honour.

"Oh! no; not the slightest accident: the foreign carriages are so safe—so formed for bad roads."

"Bad roads!" Mrs. Armytage regarding it as an established fact that the Great North Road was the triumph of Macadamization, was silent with surprise.

"But I felt a little tired when we reached Wolverfield last night," continued the stranger, throwing herself into the nearest arm-chair which the library afforded; "when Arthur, remembering that the inn at Wolverfield is what is called in England a crack inn, decided that we should stay and sleep, and so we were half suffocated in enormous feather-beds, and condemned to the nightmare by a dinner of eels, veal collops, and wine-sour plums, which, it appears, are esteemed dainties in the county of York."

Mrs. Armytage stood transfixed!

"And after all," continued the inadvertent Marian, "we experienced the horror of getting up at seven o'clock this morning, *entre chien et loup*, in order to gratify the people at Thoroton with the notion that we had hastened our

journey to do them honour; in consequence of which we arrived, *abimés, brisés de fatigue,* and poor Arthur in anything but a humour to do the agreeable to his constituents. *Ah! mon pauvre Mouton! je te croyais perdu!*"—cried Marian to the little monster, which now frisked into the room, and jumped into her lap; while Mrs. Armytage, half resentfully, half despairingly, led forward Sophia to the new-comer, with the simple presentation of—"My daughter."

"*Cela va sans dire;* I knew Miss Armytage at once, so strong a resemblance to yourself," replied Marian, too much frightened to observe that Sophia was as fair as her mother was dark; but still labouring to disguise her own timidity under a mask of assurance. And, while Sophy's advance towards a sisterly salute was sufficiently apparent, she threw herself back again in the chair, and applied herself to her *flacon.*

"I conclude it will be late before we see my son?" inquired Mrs. Armytage, resolved not to be disgusted.

"Yes, indeed. Arthur gave me to understand that I should see no more of him till dinner-time."

"And he gave no message?" observed Mrs. Armytage, half interrogatively.

"Nothing but his kind love to all at home."

"No appointment about sending the carriage for him?"

"None at all. I heard him settling it with Gumption and a lawyer's-clerk, (the clerk, I believe, of Nebwell, your solicitor,) that they would come on together."

"Come on? I do not exactly understand," said Mrs. Armytage.

"To dinner. I heard Arthur invite them all to come and dine with him."

"There must be some mistake," faltered Sophia.

"No, no mistake. I heard Arthur say, 'You must come and eat your mutton with me,' or some such words. *Couche-là: couche donc, mon petit Mouton!*" continued Mrs. Arthur,

addressing the poodle, who was munching off the tassel of a sofa cushion. "If there *is* a plague on earth, it is a lap-dog."

"If there is a plague on earth, it is the vulgar wife of one's only son!" might, perhaps, be the secret response of Mrs. Armytage.

"By the way," resumed Marian, as if struck by a bright idea, (her courage, like that of Macheath, being nearly 'run out;') perhaps I had better go and see after Célestine and the things. It is quite shocking how foreign servants get imposed upon. You have no notion how horribly they were cheated on the road!"

"As you are now among my own people," observed Mrs. Armytage, with dignity, "I trust further precaution is needless."

"Oh! one never knows! Only last night, at Wolverfield, they stole Ladislaw's case of cigars. And such a bill as they brought in, the moment they found it was for Mr. Armytage, of Holywell Park, the new mem-

ber for Thoroton! One would have thought poor Arthur was come to take possession of his family estate, instead of a seat in parliament! I used to think uncle Robsey's bills at the Plough, at Cheltenham, beat anything; but this was ten times worse, really *à faire frémir!* Three and sixpence for Mouton's supper!"

"I think you said you would like to see your room?" interrupted Sophy, judging it prudent to anticipate the explosion of her mother's wrath.

"Oh! no ceremony, thank you, I dare say I shall find my way. I have so often talked with Arthur over the plan of the house at Holywell; and settled it where we should be, when we came to stay with you," replied Mrs. Arthur; pausing at the door, to whistle to her dog, ere she disappeared from the wondering eyes of Mrs. Armytage.

Having conducted her strange, her very strange sister-in-law to the chintz bed-room,

Sophia disappeared also. But, had she returned half an hour afterwards, she would have been struck with a strong vapour of ether and eau de Cologne, and the agitated demeanour of Mademoiselle Célestine; for Marian, pale as death, was lying on the bed, half fainting and wholly exhausted by her ill-advised exertions! Her only consolation, poor soul! lay in the persuasion that she had played to admiration the part of excellent dissembling, of self-possession and dauntlessness, imposed upon her by the misjudging Arthur. She trusted she had at once done her duty to her husband, and imposed upon her imposing mother-in-law.

CHAPTER XVI.

What correspondence can I hold with you,
Who are so near, and yet so distant too?

From MARTIAL, *by* STEELE.

MRS. ARTHUR (for the future we must be permitted to adopt this convenient abbreviation) had mistaken the intentions of the one as completely as she had mistaken the character of the other. In due time arrived a note of apology and explanation from Arthur, informing Mrs. Armytage that "being under the necessity of dining with his constituents at the Blue Boar, he should not have the pleasure of seeing her till night; and begging, in case he should be detained by the convivialities of the evening, that she would not break through her usual regular habits on his account."

"I was sure there was some misunderstanding," cried Sophia, after perusing the note. "I was satisfied, my dear mother, that Arthur could never have dreamed of introducing such a person as Mr. Gumption at your dinner-table."

Mrs. Armytage was about to reply, but suddenly checked herself. The rejoinder, thus repressed, evidently regarded her daughter-in-law; for Sophy had already noticed her mother's determination to give no expression to her feelings on that head. She had not made a single remark on Mrs. Arthur; and Sophy rejoiced that she was spared the pain of defending so unpromising a cause.

Dinner-time came, and with it the French maid, with a request that her lady might be excused from the ceremony. "Madame was fatigued, and lying down." Mrs. Armytage's clouded countenance darkened to a still deeper shade. Fine-ladyism in every shape was her aversion; but in the shape of preten-

sion and vulgarity, and in her own daughter-in-law, insupportable.

Dinner-time passed, almost in silence; and after dinner, Sophy went up to the dressing-room of the invalid, in the hope of persuading her to join the family party. And such was evidently Marian's intention; but no sooner had Sophia cast her eyes on the figure emerging from the hands of Mademoiselle Célestine, than she almost repented her mission.

"Will you not put on a shawl?" said she, contemplating with a blush the Parisian costume of Mrs. Arthur, and recollecting with pain the disgust entertained by her mother towards all the varied vagaries of modern fashion. But Mademoiselle Célestine instantly negatived the shawl; a shawl would '*écraser les jolis nœuds de Madame.*' And down went Marian, leaning on the arm of the simply-attired and graceful Sophia; tricked out in all the fopperies which, during the last six months, custom had rendered natural to

her; but entertaining no suspicion that the trifles she had seen in daily use, till they appeared indispensable, could seem monstrous and unprecedented in the eyes of the Yorkshire Volumnia. Mrs. Armytage gazed upon her for a moment, as she would have done upon an overdressed doll; then turned away her head as if resolved never to look at her again.

"You spent a pleasant winter at Paris?" inquired Sophia in a low voice, dreading the continuance of the dead silence which ensued.

"Ah! delightful,—charming!—never was anything so gay. As I was saying to Arthur this morning, the country will appear horribly dull after all our dissipation."

"I trust not; we have a great deal to show you in the neighbourhood. Besides, you must need a little rest after so much gaiety."

"No, indeed; I am never tired of pleasure. With my aunt Robsey, I was so accustomed to rattling about! Lady Arabella

Quin used often to say at Paris, that she saw I was a rake at heart."

"Lady Arabella?" involuntarily demanded Mrs. Armytage.

"Lady Arabella *Quin*. Do you know her?"

"I have not that honour," replied Mrs. Armytage, with significant emphasis.

"Ah! then, some day or other I must introduce you to her. I am sure you will like her, such a charming creature! Such a fine flow of Irish spirits!—We lived in the same hotel, and I went everywhere with her."

"You were peculiarly fortunate!"

"Most fortunate!—Lady Arabella is one of those people who know everybody. Her house is the resort of all the *corps diplomatique*, and foreign travellers. Not a thing occurs in the most remote corner of Europe but you may hear of at Lady Arabella's.—And then all the ministers are at her feet. Old Talleyrand comes and plays dummy whist with her; and Pozzo di Borgo has an audience

every morning. I often used to tell Lady Arabella there would be scandal about her and Pozzo."

"Lady Arabella must have become hardened, as the heroine of scandalous adventures," observed Mrs. Armytage. "Five-and-twenty years' experience is a somewhat long noviciate."

"Oh! you mean about that Sicilian Prince, with whom people said she eloped from Naples.—Never was anything so shameful! I do assure you old Quin was travelling with them all the time. Only, to be sure, he went in the rumble, and Cagliabecchi inside. But it was not Lady Arabella's fault if her husband preferred the company of her maid."

"I am not surprised at his preferring *any* society to that of the most dissolute woman in Europe."

"Most dissolute woman in Europe!—Surely you do not mean what you say?" cried Marian. "But I know people who have lived all their

lives in England are apt to be so *very* prejudiced! There's papa, for instance, who used to tell us when we were children, that all the French people lived upon frogs; and I declare when I was in Paris we could get them for dinner but once; and that was in a *vol-au-vent* at the Rocher de Cancale, which cost us a Napoleon: and so much for English prejudices!"

"I understand from my brother that you are very musical?" said Sophia, hoping to change the conversation.

"Oh! yes,—I doat upon music! I think Arthur told me that you play yourself?"

"I sing a little;—I am no great performer," replied Sophy.

"I suppose you can have had no advantage of masters down here; and I understand you never go to town?"

"Very rarely."

"Poor thing!—What a pity!—Mamma could have recommended you a capital sing-

ing master who attends my sisters;—quite equal to Scappa; and only half-a-crown a lesson."

"I took a few lessons of Pasta, when I was last in London," said Miss Armytage.

"Oh! Pasta's style is quite gone by, now. No one thinks any thing of Pasta at Paris. Grisi is twice as popular. We used to have the most capital little music parties every Sunday evening at Lady Arabella's;—Rossini, Bellini, Mariani, Rubini, Santini,—just everybody you can think of; even Maupam, the new man who writes the 'Dance of Death' symphonies, with accompaniments of pick-axes and spades. Never was any thing so amusing!—At first, Arthur hardly liked me to go, because of its being Sunday. But then, you know, as there was no Opera on that night, it was so particularly convenient to Lady Arabella and the professors.—Is that a good piano?"

"It is thought to be one of Broadwood's

best," replied Sophia. "It was a present to me from Arthur on my birth-day; I hope you will try it to-morrow and give me your opinion."

"Oh! don't expect *me* to like it. I can't bear any instrument but Herz's or Petzold's! —Petzold's last, with the organ stop and flageolet, and drums for military symphonies, are the most perfect in the world. Lady Arabella wanted Arthur to buy me one; but, as he said, where had we got to put it?— So, all things considered, I determined to wait."

"You have probably brought over a store of new music, which will be quite a treasure in this part of the world?"

"Yes; lots of new music!—A set of Mazurkas, written on purpose for me by Musard. You will see on the title-page, 'Respectfully dedicated to Mrs. Arthur Armytage, of Holywell Park.' I had Holywell put, because there are so many Mrs. Armytages. Lady Trom-

bone has got a Mrs. Armytage for her nursery-governess; and Lord Wyndham Spalding swears that the housekeeper at his father's place in Ireland, is a Mistress Armytage. But I know he only used to say so to plague Arthur. By-the-by,"—she continued, after a moment's pause,—"I suppose you know Lord Wyndham Spalding? 'Winsome Wyn,' as they used to call him at Lady Arabella's. Is'nt he a charming creature?"

"Lord Wyndham Spalding is less in Yorkshire than the rest of his family," replied Sophia. "We are very little acquainted with him."

"Oh! but he will be here often enough now *we* are come; for he is a great ally of ours,—of *mine* I should say, for Arthur thinks him a puppy."

"It is well that my son judges him so leniently," said Mrs. Armytage, sternly. "By the rest of the world he is considered a *mauvais sujet*."

"Oh! but that is all over now. Wyn means to become a reformed rake. His father has promised to book up for him, and for the one-and-twentieth time, is going to pay his debts. It was a lucky thing for *us;* for he had persuaded Arthur to put his name to bills for him, and all sorts of things."

"I should have scarcely thought Lord Wyndham Spalding a person likely to suit my brother," said Sophia, mortified by all she was hearing.

"I don't know about suiting; but they lived with the same set of people, and were always hurdle-racing together in the Bois de Boulogne, or losing their money together at the Club, or playing the fool together at the *bal de l'Opéra*."

Mrs. Armytage groaned aloud.

"But as I said before, all *that* is over now. Arthur has got into Parliament, and Winsome Wyn has got out of his scrapes; and they are going to settle down soberly into Yorkshire

Squires. Lord Wyndham has promised to introduce us to the neighbourhood, and to get me into his mother's exclusive set."

"Sophia, my dear, you will do me the favour of entertaining Mrs. Arthur Armytage," said the over-excited Lady of Holywell, to whom the very name of the Duchess of Spalding was poison, suddenly rising to retire for the night. "I have some letters of importance which require my attention." And, with an assumption of dignity worthy of the immortal Siddons, she quitted the room.

But was her attention likely to be engrossed by letters of importance, even had their consequence been vital to the peace of the nation? Was her rest likely to be more placid than that of the preceding night? Alas! long before her disordered feelings had become subdued to even temperate heat, there was the tumult of a fresh arrival, and of a disagreeable scuffle on the stairs. Ladislaw, in French, German, and Italian, and John the footman,

in still more exquisite Yorkshire, were persuading the new member for Thoroton, that the best thing he could do under existing circumstances was to allow them to put him to bed.

But poor Arthur's brain, long accustomed to the thin potations of France, was completely volcanized by the floods of Blue Boar port, sherry, and punch, by which he had been deluged in the popular cause. And the last sounds heard by Mrs. Armytage as she closed the double doors of her dressing-room and bolted herself in, were—"Shall I tamely submit, Gen—gentlemen, free and independent elect—to—tors of Thoroton: I say, shall I t—tamely submit to the innovation, the—the aggressions of the hon—honourable gentleman opposite in the fustian jac—jacket, with the red face and Stentorian lungs?—'*Parturiunt montes*'—Gen—gentlemen electors, as we say in the House—'*Parturiunt montes, nascitur rid—rid—ridiculus mus!*'"

"Better go up quoitly to bed, Surr: Missus 'll be quoite froighted," interrupted John, coaxingly.

"Missus! who the deuce is Missus?" stammered Arthur, staggering against the wall. "I rise to explain that I have no Missus—that I admit no Missus! Mr. Speaker! I say, I accept no Missus—'*Timeo Danaos dono ferentes*' as we say in the House—'*do—do—dona ferentes!*' Upon my soul and body!—*do—do—na ferentes!*"

Fortunately, nothing further was audible in the gallery. On entering the corridor leading to the chintz-bed room, canny Yorkshire discreetly closed the folding doors behind the young Squire and his misdemeanours.

CHAPTER XVII.

It is our duty not only to scatter benefits, but even to strew flowers for the sake of our fellow-travellers in the pathways of this wretched world.

CHESTERFIELD.

WITHOUT waiting for "sermons and soda-water the day after" his escapade, Arthur had just strength to rise and make his way at an early hour to Sophia's dressing-room; and, in the happiness of meeting his dearly-loved sister, all his vexations, headaches, and qualms of conscience were forgotten.

"And now, dearest," cried he, after having expressed a thousandth part of his joy at the re-union, and slightly alluded to the intemperance to which he had been most reluctantly compelled by his stanch adherents, the faction of the Gumptionites—"tell me candidly, how

did my poor little wife get on with my mother?"

"Not, perhaps, quite so well as if you had been present to bring them together," replied Miss Armytage; "in a few days, no doubt, they will understand each other better."

"Ah! I see how it is—I knew how it would be!" replied Arthur, in a mortified tone; "poor Marian's excessive timidity has made an unfavourable impression. My mother has found out how dreadfully the poor girl stands in awe of her."

"Indeed, I think not," was Sophia's involuntary reply.

"The truth is, that poor Marian's shyness amounts to an actual infirmity; and the more she mixes in the world, the more it seems to grow upon her. To hear the sound of her own voice is quite a martyrdom to her!"

Sophia had heard of the proverbial blindness of husbands, especially towards a young and pretty wife; but she was not prepared to

find her quick-sighted brother so soon and so completely a dupe.

"She did not strike me as *particularly* shy," was all that candour would allow her to reply.

"Poor little soul! I assure you I had the greatest difficulty in forcing her into society in Paris; and when there, it was evident that she was on thorns. *Here*, however, I did hope she would feel more at ease; as I have never ceased to impress upon her mind, my dear Sophy, how much she has to expect from your protection and kindness."

"And sisterly affection," added Miss Armytage warmly. "But to say the truth, I fear she will have difficulties to encounter with my mother."

"I know it, my dear child—I know it—and so does she; and that is the very reason why you see her so overawed in my mother's presence."

"And then that unlucky visit of her father's!"

"Jack Baltimore? Heavens and earth! Has *he* been here? What unlucky wind blew him to Holywell?"

"Unlucky, indeed; for he has irrecoverably offended my mother. However, it was only natural that, believing his daughter to be here, he should be anxious to see her after so long a separation."

"Then most assuredly we shall see him here again, for he is now aware of our arrival; and, under all the circumstances, I was obliged to refuse Marian the pleasure of a visit to her family as we passed through town. We had only time to change horses."

"I hope you will be able to prevent his coming," observed Sophy, earnestly. "Indeed I cannot help thinking that his interview with my mother will secure us from his return. Nothing could be less encouraging."

"I hope she was not rude to Baltimore?" inquired Arthur, gravely. "He is a rough

diamond, it is true, but a sterling one. Baltimore has excellent qualities."

"You will admit that he has very disagreeable manners?"

"He is not a fine gentleman, I grant you; but in former days, fine gentlemen were not the fashion at Holywell."

"Mr. Baltimore appears so common, so uneducated?"

"He is no pedant, like my mother's darling, Reginald Maudsley; but he is quick, and has considerable knowledge of the world."

Sophia saw that it was useless to argue with a man so prejudiced as her brother; she, therefore, proposed that they should avoid the danger of keeping Mrs. Armytage waiting for breakfast.

"She won't expect Marian to breakfast with us, I hope?"

"Indeed I think she will."

"Quite out of the question! Marian is just

now so very delicate, that the Paris physicians have expressly interdicted early rising."

"Let us hope that the Yorkshire air will do more for her than the Paris physicians," was Sophia's rejoinder, as she accompanied her brother to the breakfast-room.

The brow of Mrs. Armytage was knit when they entered; but the cloud dispersed as soon as she found herself folded in the arms of her son: nature prevailed! And then, Arthur's apologies were uttered so frankly, and so cordially; his inquiries after herself were so warm from the heart; the expression of his hopes that nothing would ever more occur to disturb the happy understanding of the family were so genuine, that his mother's more generous nature was touched. She pressed his hand affectionately, and begged that the past might be forgotten.

During his absence, of nearly a year's duration, Arthur had gained much in personal advantages; a more decided manner, a more

independent frame of mind. He was the image of his father; but eminently his father's superior in manners and address. Mrs. Armytage gazed upon him with proud admiration, as he took his accustomed place opposite her at the breakfast table; and was quite ready to forgive Mrs. Arthur the delicacy of constitution, real or imaginary, which made it indispensable for her to drink her chocolate in her own room, so she might for a time dispense with her company. In her love for Arthur, Mrs. Armytage felt indulgent even towards Marian.

But in the course of the day, a new cause of offence arose. The fatigue of her journey, and the agitation produced by her first introduction with her husband's family, were said to have operated so severely on her health, that Arthur, after a prolonged visit to Marian's apartment, requested the family apothecary might be summoned. Now the "family apothecary" at Holywell implied a very worthy practitioner living at Thoroton, who never *did* attend the

"family." The steward's-room, with its lame, deaf, blind, and intemperate, had occasional recourse to his services; more especially after the broaching of a new twenty-years-old butt of October, or a visit from the Rotherhams and their people. But to the moderate, active, vigorous Mrs. Armytage, the very notion of his attendance, and the arrival of a daily basketful of pink pill-boxes, and salmon-coloured draughts, was a preventive remedy.

Involuntarily she shut herself into the library when she knew that Mr. Senna was picking his stealthy sick-room-like steps towards her daughter-in-law's apartment; and when Arthur announced, after his departure, that his wife was seriously indisposed, would require the greatest care, and daily attendance, Mrs. Armytage became confirmed in her previous opinion of both physician and patient. She proposed, indeed, a visit of inquiry and condolence to the invalid; but Mr. Senna's last injunctions had been that she should be suf-

fered to see nobody; she was to be kept perfectly quiet.

The remainder of the day, and part of the following, were of necessity devoted by Arthur to the completion of his electioneering business; and on his return, Marian appeared so much worse, and was pronounced to be so much worse by her medical attendant, that nothing less than sending off an express to Doncaster for further advice would satisfy the anxious husband.

But when the eminent practitioner who attended the summons, an authority which not even Mrs. Armytage could venture to impugn, pronounced that the sufferer was not only seriously ill, but the life of her expected child imminently endangered, the lady of Holywell could scarcely forgive herself her former unbelief, or Arthur his remissness, in not acquainting her with the real state of the case. Marian now acquired a wholly new position in her sight. The future heir,—the

new Arthur,—the Armytage to come,—formed a link connecting her indissolubly with the family. The question henceforth was not to resent her faults or failings, but to amend, or at least, conceal them, from the world. But of what avail to concert future measures? Marian's life was said to be actually in peril. There was not a more solicitous inquirer after every change of symptoms than Mrs. Armytage.

Youth, however, will do much; and judicious attendance and perfect tranquillity soon restored the invalid to more favourable prospects; it was pronounced that, with great care, and perfect repose, she might go on well. And now came the worst trial: for a second journey in her present weak state was impossible; and Arthur was under the immediate necessity of attending his duties in Parliament. Thoroton could not forego its claims upon its new member—it was plain, therefore, that Marian *must*.

The *first* circumstance that impressed Sophia

Armytage with a really good opinion of her sister-in-law was the gentleness with which she submitted to this thwarting of her wishes. Eagerly as she desired to visit her family; averse as she was from being left alone with that of her husband; deeply, feelingly, as she was grieved by the prospect of parting at such a moment from Arthur, nothing could evince a more amiably unselfish disposition than the mildness with which she acquiesced in the plans imposed upon her. From that time, Sophy gave herself up without reserve to study the comfort and happiness of her new sister. Even with Mrs. Armytage, Marian now began to feel herself in some measure at home. Lying quietly and silently on her sofa, she could give no further offence; and her youth and prettiness, under such circumstances, failed not to plead in her favour. The obligingness of her disposition gradually became manifest to her new relatives; and by the time Arthur

had been gone a week, in spite of the poodle and the French maid, she was almost a favourite.

It had, in fact, been said in a few fluent words, and with so careless a smile to Marian, that, as the session was likely to be short, —scarcely of six weeks' longer continuance,— she had very little to regret in the medical sentence, which compelled her to remain in Yorkshire, while her husband was sojourning at Grillon's Hotel,—that she felt it would be indecorous to express a contrary opinion. Nay, when Arthur himself joined in the assurance that "Six weeks would pass as a day," she actually tried to believe him. It was not till he was gone, and she could contrive to be quite alone, that she allowed a free course to her solitary tears, and to her feeling that she was very miserable; not perhaps the *less* miserable that her husband seemed to make so light of their separation.

The truth was,—but a truth of too ungra-

cious a nature to disclose to Marian—that the regret he experienced in parting from his kind-hearted and loving little wife, was almost counterbalanced by his satisfaction at any pretext for prolonging her separation from the Robsey tribe, and the Jackishness of her father's establishment. He fancied, too, that thus left alone with his family, they would insensibly amalgamate; that Marian would learn to respect his mother and love his sister, as he himself loved and respected them; while Marian's better qualities could not fail to secure their affections in return. Perhaps, too, the occupation afforded by his new duties and a something of attraction in the prospect of one more bachelor spring at a London hotel tended to facilitate the sacrifice of Marian's society.

He did not consider, and even Marian herself was at first scarcely aware, how wearily and slowly pass the days, every hour of which is devoted to an especial and distant object.

That third week in June on which it was humbly hoped by the denizens of his gracious Majesty's Lower House, that their patriotic labours would be ended by the merciful interposition of the King, engrossed every thought of her mind. Till then, all must be a blank. She still trembled when in the presence of Mrs. Armytage; still entertained a reverential feeling for Sophia, as towards the lioness's whelp; and with the heart-sickness of discontent, began to find even Mademoiselle Célestine and Mouton importunate and insupportable.

The neighbourhood, too,—the hospitable neighbourhood — was just then completely broken up: no one remaining but the Maranhams, who were rare visitors, and the Wemmersleys, who were unwelcome ones, at Holywell, while Marian's feebleness prevented her from enjoying any active country diversion. A slow drive with Mrs. Armytage in her pony-chair, round the park, or a dull saunter

with Sophia round the still leafless shrubberies, was her utmost stretch of exercise.

It was a backward spring; the scene was cheerless; and Marian could not conceal her regrets for the cheerfulness and movement of Paris.

"It was so very provoking to be obliged to come away, just as the Tuileries were coming into beauty!"—she exclaimed one day to Sophia, having returned from a country airing along the high road, where nothing but milestones and market-carts were visible; and unaware that Mrs. Armytage was still in the room. "The climate of Paris is certainly a fortnight earlier than that of London, three weeks than that of chilly Yorkshire. I assure you, Lady Arabella and I had begun to sit out of doors before I left Paris; and I was longing to see the orange-trees brought out, and the lilacs and chestnuts in bloom."

"But you will see lilacs and chestnuts in

bloom at Holywell; and when an orangery is placed in the cedar-garden, I assure you it makes a very respectable appearance."

"Yes, for Yorkshire, and in the month of July, when one has grown tired of looking at green trees; but, at best, so very inferior to those fine old Bourbon trees, four hundred years old, with the gay groups sitting chatting and flirting round them, and all the world full of life and animation!"

"The scene possessed the charm of novelty to you," replied the sober Sophia. "Rely upon it you would have soon been tired of Paris, had you remained there longer."

"Oh! no, indeed;—it is impossible to grow tired of Paris. Lady Arabella has been there fifteen years, and likes it better every season. She says it is the post-house where all Europe change horses; and that, in the course of a year or two, you see the whole round of your acquaintance, in the pleasantest way; for they

seldom stay long enough for one to become bored by them."

Miss Armytage, aware of her mother's insurmountable objection to the word "bored," now became aware, by a certain impatient movement at the further end of the room, that the rigid purist was present. She strove to change the turn of conversation; but Marian would not be checked.

"And then, in Paris, one has so much more real comfort with so much less fuss and ceremony! Instead of sitting down to a stately dinner, with half a dozen servants to stare you out of countenance, you dine *en cabinet* at some *café*—the *Rocher* or the *Frères Provençaux*, twice as well, and at the hour you like: after which, instead of boring yourself with a dull evening at home, you scramble to one of the ten theatres, with the certainty of being amused."

"I fancied that the society of Paris did not

frequent the *cafés* and the *petit spectacles?*" said Sophia.

"Oh!—I don't know. Lady Arabella used to go to them all; and I conclude she knows what is proper. Besides, the English are privileged, and do all sorts of things. They are always getting caricatured as *La famille Anglaise.* There was one came out of Lady Arabella eating slices of melon on horseback at Tortoni's door, that would have made you die with laughing. Wyn Spalding sent it to her, *pour ses étrennes,* on New Year's day."

Sophia perceived with delight that her mother had now quitted the room. Such was Mrs. Armytage's progress in the art of toleration towards Marian's little failings. Resolved not to be more disgusted with her than she could help, she now closed her eyes or ears, or absented herself, when she found that Mrs. Arthur's want of tact was endangering her forbearance; for Marian was a very important object in her eyes. That epoch to which the

young wife looked forward as destined to reunite her with Arthur, was a moment of no less auspicious promise to Mrs. Armytage, as likely to afford an heir to the vast estates of Holywell—to exclude Reginald Maudsley at once and for ever!

She recalled to mind every preparative to which the expected birth of her own Arthur had formerly given rise:—the bonfires on Holywell Hill—the beacon on Holywell Tower—the ox roasted whole in Holywell Close—the labouring families feasted at Holywell Cross; and secretly promised herself that all this parade should be revived for the arrival of the new heir. The whole neighbourhood should see that she experienced no mortification in the alliance formed by her son. Ale should be brewed, and acres of oaks planted, for the future benefit of her children's children, and the glory of Holywell. Marian was no longer the daughter of a Jack Baltimore—she was the wife of Arthur Maudsley Armytage, of

Holywell. She would meet the sneers of the Wemmersleys with a smile; and defy even the impertinence of her county rival, the insolent Duchess of Spalding,—a proposed intimacy with whom was, after all, one of the worst offences of her daughter-in-law, in the eyes of Mrs. Armytage.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Were I a man,—a Duke,—
I would remove these tedious stumbling-blocks.
Being a woman, I will not be slack
To play my part in fortune's pageant.

SHAKSPEARE.

THE offending Duchess belonged to a class of women rare in our own times and country, though not unfrequent at the more troublous epochs, or in less tranquil lands; who, born to no earthly business, make the business of the whole world their own. Not that she was endowed with the far-sighted spirit of intrigue of a Princesse des Ursins—not that she boasted the coarse but vigorous energies of a Sarah of Marlborough—or even the persevering cunning of a Madame de Maintenon;—but she had all their activity—all their art in esta-

blishing a sway over the conduct of others; and withal a certain fidgetiness of mind, which seemed to derive new stimulus from total want of occupation. She was an Avarilla Maranham, with wider opportunities.

In girlhood, unable to resign herself to the uneventful subordination of the nursery and the school-room, she was always plotting the dismissal of an under-governess, or trying to inspire the Viscountess her mother with a spirit of patronage for some pet drawing-master or mantua-maker. Introduced into the great world, her manœuvres to avoid such and such a partner, or to achieve an invitation to such or such a ball, were of almost Machiavellian art; and from the moment she discovered that the young Duke of Spalding was suspected to be on the eve of a matrimonial engagement with the daughter of one of his Yorkshire neighbours—marked him for her own! She had cared little for him as England's premier Duke; scarcely more as the inheritor

of sixty thousand per annum; but when she saw in the wealthy magnate a prize to be won per force of management, a captive to be transferred from other nets to her own, there was no resisting the temptation; and so skilfully were her projects conceived and executed, that very few months sufficed to render the strategist in hanging sleeves—her Grace the Duchess of Spalding.

Perhaps it was the ready fruition of the scheme which soon rendered propensity a habit, and habit second nature; for the Duchess now became a manœuvrer by vocation. Rich, noble, admired, she could not rest, for very restlessness; but seemed to invent objects of desire for the mere labour of the attainment. Without interest in politics, she became a party woman; without taste for the arts, a patroness; without one pious or Christianly aspiration, a zealous high churchwoman. The poor Duke whom she had finessed out of his first love, she now cheated out of his

nereditary avocations; trafficked in his behalf with ministry; chaffered with his interest; paltered with his patronage. He could not promise a living, but her Grace contrived to induct some Tory *protégé* of her own; he could not renew the lease of a farm, but she managed to introduce a clause. Did he presume to order new furniture for his library, he was sure to find it translated to one of the drawing-rooms; or if he was rash enough to purchase a picture, or give a commission for a statue, it was certain to be pounced upon for the Duchess's private suite of apartments; where, of all the house, it was least likely to meet his eye.

Not that he was an unaffectionate husband; but the overstrained activity of his wife fatigued him to death. The Duke of Spalding's constitutional indolence was even more than patrician, and he found himself wedded to a whirlwind! He was naturally fond of music; but within two years of his marriage, her Grace be-

concerted him into abhorrence of all harmony. He took to hunting; but the Duchess contrived to be neck-and-neck with him over every five-barred gate in the county. He sought refuge in agriculture; but her Grace patent-ploughed him out of the field, and ran him to earth in a crop of ruta-baga. To whatever pastime or employment he addressed himself, *her* intention cast its shadow before; and, scared by the pursuit, Spalding's "occupation" was "gone" in a moment!

There was but one resource! He became a club-man, and locked himself up in the dear delights of whist. The blue chambers of White's and Brookes's defy the intrusion of manœuvring wives; and, within those sacred retreats, the hereditary legislator had for many years past shuffled, cut, and dealt away the session; a period for whose prolongation not even Bellamy himself could supplicate the gods more fervently than the hen-hunted Duke of Spalding.

Still there was Spalding Castle in the distance, with its six or seven months of marital martyrdom; and had not the Duchess one day,

"When cursed with many a granted prayer,"

suddenly hit upon a new object for which to persecute the ministry with little notes (marked "private and confidential") of solicitation, the poor Duke might perhaps have ended his woes by suspending himself, for very weariness, to one of his ancestral oaks. But she had luckily become ambitious of fettering down her husband by a place at court, (Buckhounds, Mastership of the Horse, or new Lord Chamberlainship,—what matters it to the reader?) and, having assailed a chief clerk by the loan of her Opera-box to his wife; a private secretary, by sides of venison and hampers of pine-apples; and the private secretary's public master, by exaggerated representations of borough interest, church preferment, and local influence pertaining to the house of Spalding, her Grace's manœuvres were eventually crowned

with success: from July to January, if not from January to July, the Duke was now no longer his own master; while *she* became more than ever her own mistress.

The joys of new cares, too, were added to her former pleasures: she had children; and the children had nurses, governesses, tutors, masters, to be out-generalled and outwitted. It was a triumph, for a nature such as hers, to manœuvre a naughty child to the Opera, or a sickly one to a drive on a damp day. She taught the little creatures to plan, to plot, to deceive, to equivocate, to lie; and the young lords consequently grew up into *roués*, and the young ladies into women of fashion. But while this auspicious education was in progress, the Duchess did not slumber at her post. She had always some petty intrigue to carry on, some promising young clergyman, of high character and a very pretty vein for poetry, to manœuvre into a prebend; some offending country neighbour of opposite politics, whose

daughters she had vowed should never enter the pale of Almack's; some nineteenth son of a nineteenth Scotch cousin, whom she was trying to get made *attaché* at Rio Janeiro; or some stripling of a political economist, whom she was bent upon having reviewed into notoriety in the Quarterly. Nay, between the pauses of her grander movements, she would even busy herself with the welfare of such small-deer as pages or nursery-maids, set all her energies to work to expose the peccadilloes of some noble friend's groom of the chambers; or congratulate herself upon getting one of Farmer Smith's Patagonian progeny promoted to be drum-major in the Blues.

Between such a woman—such a Duchess—and Mrs. Armytage, there existed a moral antipathy. It was not that the Lady of Holywell was less active, less domineering than the Lady of Spalding Court; but Mrs. Armytage busied herself only with her own concerns and those of her family, while the Duchess could

scarcely bear that a lamp should be extinguished in one of the tin mines of Cornwall without her interference. Mrs. Armytage despised the Duchess as an ambitious *intrigante;* the Duchess despised Mrs. Armytage as *bornée,* even in her despotism. Yorkshire, wide as it is, was scarcely large enough to contain their vast animosity! And then the Armytage was a Whig, and the Spalding a Tory—the Armytage a great lady of the country, the Spalding a great lady of the town. The Duchess could by no means mortify the 'Squiress; for the 'Squiress was a firm and consistent contemner of rank-by-itself rank—never ventured a step beyond her station, and afforded no opportunity to the enemy of humiliating her by repulse.

The Wemmersleys, indeed, had for a moment rejoiced the busy Duchess with the hope of inflicting an humiliation on Holywell. The moment she discovered them to sail in the north of Mrs. Armytage's opinion, *she* courted

them into the summer radiance of her smiles; patronized them here—caressed them here, and exhibited them as the chief objects of her favour. But here again she was mistaken. Whatever took the Wemmersleys to the other side of the county, Mrs. Armytage considered as a happy riddance to the neighbourhood of Holywell; and she was under a real obligation to the Duchess for rendering Mill Hill so often tenantless. At length it occurred to the great lady, whose temper was not softened, nor her disposition ennobled by the practices of a long life of art and artifice, to allure Arthur Armytage into her brilliant London circle, and attach him to the feet of one of her beautiful daughters, who might dismiss him with scorn when a nobler suitor should present himself.

But by one of those unlooked-for entanglements which perplex the web of human destiny, at the very moment the Duchess of Spalding was courting the young Captain to her house, *he* was courting Jack Baltimore's daugh-

ter into his. The Morning Post announced Arthur's abrupt marriage, and the Duchess was defeated; but the Morning Post also announced the *déjeuner* in Portland Place—and the Duchess was avenged. What a marriage! What a match! What a blow for Mrs. Armytage!

Nor had the Wemmersleys failed to feed the vast bonfire of her rejoicings with all the faggots they could make up of ill-natured rumours touching the Baltimore family. In return, her Grace favoured them with the impertinent comments transmitted from Paris by Lord Wyndham Spalding, in his letters to his sisters. *She* knew that Marian was shy and awkward—easily counselled, easily governed, and with no stronger shield than upright intentions to secure her from being counselled and governed ill. *She* knew that the timid Mrs. Arthur had fallen into the control of Lady Arabella Quin, and immediately resolved, should she ever visit Yorkshire, to convert her

into an implement of torture to her long-offending mother-in-law.

Her Grace's first measure towards the accomplishment of her projects, was to obtain favour in the sight of Arthur. Although her sons were intimately acquainted with him, the Duchess knew little more of the young Life-Guardsman previous to his marriage, than is to be learned by a five minutes' colloquy at Almack's, where the interlocutors are a well-diamonded Duchess of fifty, and a shy young Cornet of twenty-one ; or by still briefer interviews at the door of her Opera-box, where, in the absence of a more eligible escort, his assistance was tolerated in calling the carriage or tying on the snow-shoe. At that period, indeed, she had felt a certain degree of hesitation in courting him to her house—his assiduities might interfere with those of the young Marquis of Clydesdale, or annoy the highly-exclusive Duke of Witherby, whom she had

still hopes of securing for her daughter Honoria.

But all was over now. Though Lady Honoria and Lady Amabel were still unmarried, the Duchess could, with perfect propriety, invite her young Yorkshire neighbour (who must of course be leading a comfortless bachelor life) to dine in St. James's Square, or take a seat in their box, whenever he had no better engagement. Nothing could be more charitable, nothing more kind than such attentions, particularly considering their political differences, and her son Leicester's recent defeat at Thoroton.

Even her charge to her daughters of "Pray, be very civil to young Armytage, but take care not to let him be in your way," can scarcely be considered a drawback on her well-meant hospitality; while the secret rejoinder of Lady Amabel to her sister,—"Rely upon it, mamma intends to make him her fireguard, as she did

Wemmersley last season, whenever she wanted to interfere with our flirtations," need only be taken as an evidence of the success of their ladyships' distinguished education in the art and science of modern manners.

CHAPTER XIX.

Here comes the Briton.—Let him be so entertained among you as suits a stranger of his quality. I beseech you all, be better known to this gentleman.

SHAKSPEARE.

THE Duchess's calculation, that Arthur would only too eagerly accept her general invitation, proved erroneous. For a whole week the new member did not make himself visible in St. James's Square; and her Grace, satisfied of the all-surpassing attractions of her gay house and brilliant society, fancied that the sort of shy reserve so common to young Englishmen must be the cause of his absence: yet how to attribute shyness or reserve to the frank and well-bred Mr. Armytage, who had "*fait fureur*" in Paris, whose demeanour at his election

bear-baiting, and whose maiden speech in the House, were already cited as an honour to the county of York?—Still less was her Grace inclined to accept as an apology for his remissness, the motive assigned by her son Lord Leicester, that "Armytage was too well amused at his clubs and among his former brother-officers, to trouble himself with the intolerable nuisance of dressing to dine out."

Intent on the accomplishment of her scheme, the Duchess next decided that Arthur was proud—proud with the susceptible pride of a 'squire; that her civilities had been too familiar; and a vast card was accordingly despatched, inviting him for a solemn dinner-party at a fortnight's date,—a solemn dinner-party on an ex-senatorial Saturday, which left him no plea of evasion. He found one, however, in spite of all her precaution. That one eventful and especial Saturday was the last day of Ascot Races; when profiting by the *dies non*, Arthur had engaged himself to dine

and sleep at Lord Rydal's, in the neighbourhood of Windsor.

The Duchess was excessively provoked; the more so that the recusant object of her patronage could plead an engagement so much to the purpose. Her own sons, ay! even her eldest, her Cupid of fifty descents, the irresistible Marquis of Downham, had expressed in her hearing the most anxious desire to form part of the race-party at Lord Rydal's, and his consciousness of the inaccessibility of such a distinction. That Arthur Armytage had managed to penetrate the exclusive portal, she could neither understand nor forgive!

"I have been attacking this man only to get at his wife,"—was the result of her serious meditations on the subject;—"and I see that it is only *through* his wife I can hope to attack *him*."

And chance favoured the design. On the following day there was what is called a "private view" of a fashionable exhibition;—that

is, an opportunity for the elect of the gay world to crush each other to death, in a mob of five hundred people; instead of taking their ease, among the two or three individuals of doubtful quality paying for their admittance on the following day. In the thickest and hottest of this privileged mob was Arthur fated to encounter the Duchess, panting and ghastly, salts-bottle and *vinaigrette* in hand.

"Delighted to see you, Mr. Armytage.—What a dreadful crowd!—The heat is perfectly overpowering. The directors ought to be more reserved in issuing tickets. Two young ladies already carried out fainting; and old Lord Fussball, in an attack, which I trust may not prove apoplectic,—appearances were sadly against him."

"Can I be of any use in assisting you to make your way towards the door?" inquired Arthur good-naturedly; compassionating her Grace's half-asphyxiated condition.

"Thank you,—no! We are making our way regularly through the rooms.—I have scarcely seen the pictures in this room. Honoria, my love, there is Lord Edward Brereton just squeezing in at the door, and bowing to you."

Arthur was about to profit by this *aside*, and turn away. But the Duchess was quick-sighted as a lynx.

"I hope you have satisfactory news from Holywell, Mr. Armytage?—It is a very great disappointment to my daughters and myself — (Amabel!—Lord Clydesdale going away, and you have not spoken to him!)—that Mrs. Arthur Armytage should have been prevented visiting town this season. We have heard so much of her from my son Wyndham, as to venture to look upon her as an acquaintance; and I was in hopes we should have met very frequently in the course of the season!"

Arthur bowed his acknowledgments.

"As it is, I trust our intercourse will com-

mence on a still more friendly footing in the country. Mrs. Armytage, I know, is wedded to Holywell, and the thirty miles' distance between us has proved an obstacle to intimacy between the families. You must persuade your wife to be more indulgent,—to suppose us neighbours; and leave it to *us* to induce her to look upon us as friends."

The warm feelings of Arthur were touched; they were particularly accessible to any kindness shown to Marian. He was fluent in his thanks;—then, turning to Lady Honoria, whose eyes seemed riveted on a fine Claude, uttered some commonplace remarks on the merits of the collection, from her replies to which it was easy to be gathered that she did not know a Hogarth from a Teniers, a Rubens from a Reynolds.

"If you are fond of pictures, Mr. Armytage," said the Duchess, graciously, "you should accompany me this evening to my bro-

ther Lord Wildingham's;—his gallery is considered one of the most select in London."

Arthur, again all gratitude, was compelled to admit that, if he could get away from the house, he was engaged to join the Rotherhams at the Opera.

"Join the Rotherhams!" And he had never once profited by the Duchess's invitation to her box!

"I did not know the Rotherhams were Opera-going people!" said Lady Honoria, sneeringly. "In fact, one seldom sees them anywhere."

"Opera-going, but not ballet-staying people," replied Arthur with a smile. "Lady Rotherham's health does not admit of her keeping late hours."

"Yes, I am aware that she is a sort of Madame Argan, who has been dying by half inches these one and twenty years," said the Duchess of Spalding. "I used to put her

name down for my footman's weekly circular of inquiries after the sick and convalescent; but as she was always 'as well as could be expected,' and as I expected nothing at all about the matter, I scratched her out at last as dead—or ought to be dead."

Arthur did not laugh, though he saw it was expected of him.

"I fancy Willis pays an annuity to Lady Rotherham and her daughter for airing his rooms. There they are every Wednesday, I am told, as punctual as the candle-lighters;—and, as one is going up the stairs two or three hours afterwards, one is sure to be bowed to from some odd corner by two mummies hooded up in their cloaks to wait for their carriage; and to hear, when yours drives off, that Lady Rotherham's stops the way."

"Not always quite so early!" said Arthur Armytage, piqued for his friends. "I assure you I was dancing with Lady Laura at Lady Rydal's ball, at three o'clock this morning."

"A very pretty story, upon my honour!" exclaimed a wheezy voice issuing from a fat figure in a bright blue pelisse, wedged in between the Duchess of Spalding and Lady Amabel, and overpoweringly scented with *verveine*. "So this is the way you country gentlemen perform your duties in parliament? Poor dear Dyke declares he never gets a glimpse of you in the House, not even when the Leeds railroad was brought forward last week. Well, well!—if you don't make me some very fine promises and come and take your family-dinner with us on Sunday, trust to me for writing word of all your proceedings to your wife!" And poor Arthur found his hands heartily shaken by the good-humoured Mrs. Dyke Robsey, her elbows meanwhile protruding themselves unmercifully into the shrinking sides of the Duchess and her daughter.

But the Duchess was too discreet even to look her astonishment.

"And what in the wide world have you been

doing with yourself ever since you have been in town?" pursued the blue lady, alive to nothing but the good fortune of a meeting with her young relative. "We've been expecting and expecting you to call again, ever since the day you left your card; and no end of dinner-parties, and always a knife and fork kept for *you*. You know you're a first favourite with poor dear Dyke,—only he's rather in dudgeon just now about your name being in the majority against the Liskeard railroad. And between ourselves, my brother Baltimore is getting rather huffy about never being able to get sight of you. He says he calls and calls, and you are always out, or your servant says you are dining at Lord Rotherham's or Botherum's, or some great man's or other. Now you know Jack has a warm heart, and it's natural he should——I beg your pardon, ma'am," cried Mrs. Robsey, interrupting herself to address the Duchess, "but your

voyl is sticking to my chain, and if we don't take care, there'll be a tear,—and tear is sometimes worse than wear,—as my sister Baltimore says to her bantlings."

The Duchess did not, or would not, hear. A slight movement in the crowd favoured her escape; and the magnificent *demi-voile* of *application de Bruxelles* soon hung in shreds round her supercilious face, while, with a languid smile of adieu to Arthur, the Ladies Spalding passed on superior.

"Well, if ever I saw such folly!" cried Mrs. Dyke Robsey. "Forty guineas, if it cost a shilling; and just because she was too idle to help me disentangle it!"

"Hush!—the Duchess of Spalding will overhear you!" whispered Arthur, hoping to moderate her voice, if not her indignation.

"The Duchess—*who* did you say?—the *Duchess?*" cried Mrs. Robsey, still louder than before.

"The Duchess of Spalding.—She is still close to us—be cautious," said Arthur.

"Now why didn't you tell me at once that it was the Duchess of Spalding!" exclaimed Marian's aunt. "It would have been such a famous opportunity for getting acquainted with her, and I've long been wanting to know her. We were all staying together at the York Hotel at Dover last summer. Do see if we can't push after her, and you can introduce me, and I can apologize."

"The Duchess and her daughters, as you perceive, are in haste to leave the room," said Arthur in a low voice, perceiving, from the smiles evident on several strange faces around them, that their conversation had been overheard. "Another time."

"Ay, ay! another time!" she replied, easily satisfied, and easily diverted from her object. "We'll talk about it to-morrow at dinner. Six o'clock and punctual, please, as it's Sunday, on account of the servants. It's poor dear

Dyke's rule, as you may remember, for the establishment to enjoy itself of a Sunday."

"My dear Armytage," whispered Lord Greta, who had accompanied Arthur to the gallery, and hastened to rejoin him as soon as he noticed the departure of the Duchess of Spalding, his "favourite aversion,"—"I think I hear you making an engagement for Sunday, as if you were inclined to forget your promise of accompanying us to Petersham to-morrow!"

"I had indeed forgotten it," replied Armytage; "but pray let me present you to Mrs. Robsey, that you may assist me to plead my excuses."

And an introduction to a Lord—a young and handsome Lord—certainly had its share in averting the good lady's displeasure; while Greta, too gentlemanly to fancy himself irretrievably lost in the eyes of the world, from being seen in conversation with a lady in a flashy pelisse, and too true to his political vocation not to profit by Arthur's whisper of—

"wife to the Whig member for Perjureham," explained the previous engagement of his friend with the most courteous deference.

Escorted to her carriage by the two young men, her vast variety of chains and trinkets jingling at every step, Mrs. Robsey, after uttering very audible adieux to "his Lordship" from the door of her britschka, called aloud to bid Arthur "mind and come and take his mutton with them the first idle day, or poor dear Dyke would never forgive him.—It was shameful of him to give all his time to those Botherums."

Luckily, Lord Greta was out of hearing.

CHAPTER XX.

Was it kind,
To leave me like a turtle here alone,
To droop and mourn the absence of my mate?
When thou art from me, every place is desert,
And I, methinks, am savage and forlorn.

OTWAY.

To the Greta family, Arthur Armytage certainly did devote the whole of his leisure. The house of Jack Baltimore it was impossible for him to enter without disgust:—noisy, as it was dirty, disorderly, and necessitous — fit home for a man who, his whole life long, had devoted himself to a horse; and poignant was his regret that the nearest relatives of his wife should be so degraded in the eyes of society—so unattractive in his own. His father's nearest relative, Lord Armytage, occupied a post in the administration; and Arthur kept sedu-

lously aloof, lest he might be supposed to court his Lordship's patronage. But, at Lord Rotherham's, where he was welcomed like the Piccolomini to the hearth of Wallenstein, as the "*kind des hauses*,"—where he found his earliest friends and playmates, friendly and lively as ever, and principles and habits congenial with his own,—he was glad to take refuge from the solitary publicity of a London hotel. The Earl bade him remember, as he had been wont to do in his holidays and vacations, that there was always a place for him at his table; and Arthur, who had always reverenced Lord Rotherham as his father's most intimate friend—the afflicted witness of his untimely end—felt no scruple in accepting the hospitality thus cordially tendered by his Yorkshire neighbour.

It was so easy, too, to walk home from the House arm-in-arm with his friend Greta, straight to St. James's Place; and Lady Rotherham was so glad to see and welcome a

guest who knew her ten children name by name, and which of them had been run away with by his pony, and which had so narrowly escaped drowning in the reservoir, and whom one and all called "Arthur," and romped with as a brother. Even Lady Laura, though somewhat haughty and reserved with casual visiters, had her old-standing jokes and friendly words of mutual understanding with *him;* so that, after a fortnight passed in London, a particular chair came to be apportioned as that of Arthur Armytage at Lord Rotherham's table, and a particular corner of a particular sofa, in Lady Rotherham's drawing-room, to bear his name. His worthy host and hostess considered that they were doing not only what was kind, but what was *right,* in affording to the son of their old friend, placed in such a position as Arthur, a resource against the temptations of idleness and dissipation. They left him no excuse for wasting his time and his money in barrack-rooms or clubs.

And in such a mode of life, it must be owned that there was something peculiarly agreeable to Arthur. He liked the stir of a large family, combined with the regularity of an orderly one. He liked the *bonhommie* of the Greta tribe — their cheerfulness — their cordiality. The whole thing came refreshingly to him after a prolonged residence at Paris; where, if he had found much to amuse, he had seen little to approve. But now, he was once more among people of his own caste and kind, he was very happy—perfectly happy—*too* happy perhaps, considering that in the first year of his marriage, he was for the first time separated from his wife.

Marian's letters, however, arrived as regularly as the post, to remind him that if *he* was enjoying himself, she was sad and a sufferer. *She* complained of the dulness of the time which was passing for *him* so pleasantly, intreating him, however, and with perfect sincerity of heart, not to apply himself *too* severely

to the duties of his new vocation; not to give up his thoughts *too* exclusively to politics—to seek the relaxation so indispensable for his health—to avoid the anxious fears for herself which she knew must be pressing on his mind.

Arthur's heart almost reproached him with duplicity while he was perusing these affectionate and candid outpourings of Marian's feelings. Yet he had done no wrong; had no conjugal backslidings with which to reproach himself; and to have volunteered to his wife a self-accusation of finding himself too prone to bachelor-enjoyments, and too happy in her absence, would have been at once an injury and an insult.

He profited, therefore, by her often-repeated exhortations, to amuse himself during the intervals of his parliamentary duties:—dining with the Rotherhams, lounging in the Park with Greta, or dancing at Almack's with Lady Laura, whenever they were at the trouble of procuring him a subscription. June, with its

thorns and its roses, its strawberries and its villa-déjeûnés, had already begun; and though Arthur was not heartless enough to purpose prolonging his sojourn in town one hour beyond the necessities of the case, yet he *did* sometimes almost regret that the days passed so quickly, and that the hours were of imperceptible duration.

The fault might in some measure lie with his mother. The atmosphere of Holywell was so apt to be a stormy one!—*too* stormy for a man of Arthur's indolent complexion and cheerful temper. He dreaded the *tracasseries* of the place—the testiness of the old servants—the dependence to which he found himself reduced. Grillon's Hotel wanted (he flattered himself that such was his conviction) only Marian's presence to be a perfect Paradise; for with all the duplicity of this wicked world, few of us succeed in deceiving others so completely as we succeed, without effort, in deceiving ourselves.

One person, meanwhile, was keenly alive to the moral dangers of Arthur's position. The clear-sighted Sophia felt that in Marian's place she should be less satisfied than Marian with the tenour of Arthur's correspondence; and was beginning to count the days to the expected close of the session, almost as eagerly as her sister-in-law. She was better acquainted with the versatility of Arthur's disposition; with his former familiarity in the Greta family, and the expectations to which it had given rise. She even thought her friend Lady Laura wrong, innocently and unconsciously wrong, for continuing to dance with her brother; more particularly when the fact had been pointed out to her notice in one of Mr. Wemmersley's morning visits, by an observation of "So I see, by the Morning Post, that our new Member is taking his Wednesday's privilege of relaxation, and keeping up his loves and friendships of old times?"

"I really do not understand you," said

Sophia, dreading that Marian, who was going through a course of fashions with Mrs. Wemmersley, should overhear the insinuation.

"Don't you? Have you not observed that his pairing off with Lady Laura Greta in the Almack quadrilles, is regularly announced?"

"Very likely. The last time I was in town, I saw my own name coupled among the waltzers, with that of the Duke of Wetherby; *I*, who never waltzed in my life, and never had the slightest acquaintance with the Duke."

"And your brother, of course, has not the slightest acquaintance with Lady Laura?" persisted Wemmersley, laughing significantly.

"On the contrary, they have been friends from childhood; and I fancy it is only on the score of such very old acquaintanceship, that a married man has a right to intrude on a young lady as a partner."

"I thank you for the hint!" he replied; and Sophia was rejoiced that at any cost she had succeeded in diverting him from his object.

"I now understand why you received me so very coolly last year, when you accompanied the Rotherhams to the Doncaster Race ball; and you shall find (at the ball which I conclude our new Member means to give us *at* his return *on* his return,) that I have profited by the lesson. Trust me, I will not again interfere with Lord Greta's better pretensions."

Sophia would have given a great deal to ascertain, after the departure of the Wemmersleys, how much of this commentary on Arthur's conduct had reached the ears of her sister-in-law. But she could not hazard a direct inquiry; and Marian's simplicity of mind was exactly calculated to defeat any other mode of attack. The moment she detected any one trying to discover her sentiments, she made twice as ample a declaration as the occasion needed, often avowing much more than the manœuvrer was bent on ascertaining. Miss Armytage was almost afraid of learning, not only that Arthur's wife had over-

heard all, but to what extent that all affected her feelings, and was likely to influence her conduct.

She noticed, however, that Marian that evening looked paler and sadder than usual; and, on her retiring to rest, ventured to observe to her mother that Mrs. Arthur's strength and spirits were manifestly declining. But Mrs. Armytage, whose thoughts were engrossed by the splendid nursery-furniture and nursery-suits she had that morning received from town for the use of the little heir of Holywell, and purposed presenting on the morrow to her daughter-in-law, attributed her languor to the approach of the event so anxiously anticipated by the family.

The morrow came; the gifts, courteously offered and accepted, scarcely seemed for a moment to occupy the attention of the listless Marian. Old Mrs. Macklin, who had presided over the birth of Arthur and Sophia, and ever since formed a sort of fixture among the

green and ever-springing olive branches at Greta Castle, was somewhat scandalized to see the young lady to whom she was now about to devote her services, so insensible to the beauty of the Valenciennes cockades, and the fineness of the cambric robing; and felt persuaded that Mrs. Armytage must be indignant at the ingratitude of her daughter-in-law. But she was mistaken. Mrs. Armytage liked Marian the better for her indifference to such things.—She began to hope that her mind was less vulgar and trivial than she had imagined.

Time wore on. The days, long and Midsummerish as they were, passed away. All the papers agreed in announcing the prorogation of Parliament for the 21st; and on the 23rd Arthur would be at Holywell! Still, Marian's depression was not diminished, nor Sophia's anxiety. The Duchess of Spalding who, on her annual journey northwards, was in the habit of dignifying Mill Hill by making it her sleeping inn, took the opportunity of

paying a morning visit to Mrs. Armytage, on her progress home the following day; apparently for the purpose of announcing her regret that Arthur's family engagements with the Rotherhams had prevented her the happiness of catching a glimpse of him in town: and when Mrs. Armytage drily replied that it gave her unfeigned pleasure to hear of her son being engrossed by such satisfactory connexions, the Duchess had no readier means of revenge than by redoubling her attentions to the sad and silent Marian; and assuring her that Mr. Armytage had in some degree made the *amende honourable,* by promising that the first visit made by himself and his wife on her recovery, should be to Spalding Court. Marian smiled and bowed her ready acceptance. It was a solace to her to think that her first visit was not already pledged to Greta Castle.

But the information afforded by the gossiping Duchess, and incidentally confirmed in Lady Honoria's chit-chat with Miss Armytage,

that Arthur was the gayest of the gay, the most bachelor-like of bachelor-husbands, did not prepare the family to receive with patience his announcement that, "very particular engagements in town would prevent his being at home till the 25th, when Lord Greta had promised him a place in his carriage."

"Why not come in his own?" exclaimed his proud mother.

"Why not come in the mail?" exclaimed the impatient Marian.

"Why not come at once?" *thought* even the forbearing Sophia.

But they had no leisure for much thinking or saying on the subject. In the course of the day, Mrs. Macklin announced Marian to be seriously ill; and Mrs. Armytage again began to tremble at the prognostications which threatened a triumph to Reginald Maudsley. The old nurse, eager to enhance the merits of her services, hinted that children born under such circumstances seldom survived. Even

the doctors seemed discouraged. An express was hastily despatched for Arthur; and, from the bell-ringers to the park-keepers and their bonfire, all was anxiety and suspense at Holywell.

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